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THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF CHRIST.

ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION.

EXPANDED FROM A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CONGRESS AT AMSTERDAM, SEPTEMBER 1903.

BY

OTTO PFLEIDERER

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

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THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

It is to the great and abiding credit of the scientific theology of the nineteenth century that it has learned to distinguish between the Christ of Faith and the man Jesus of history, two entities which have been identified by ecclesiastical dogma. By means of careful and toilsome critical investigation it has been shown how the dogma of the God-man gradually took form, precipitated as it were from the intermingling of religious ideas of various origin with the reminiscences of the early Church concerning the life of her Master. An attempt has then been made, by means of

separating away later accretions and by falling back upon the oldest historic sources, to approach as nearly as possible to the historic truth concerning the Founder of our religion, and to present His form, in its simple human grandeur and stripped of all mythical accessories, as the ideal of a lofty and noble religious hero worthy of the veneration of the mind and heart of the modern world.

The value of this attempt is incontestable, even though, upon calm reflection, one must confess that many illusions are current as to the significance of the results that have been thus obtained. In glancing at the numerous Lives of Christ, it is impossible to suppress the question whether these attempts to reach the basis of historical truth can ever result in other than hypothetical conjecture—whether it is not true that the sharper the definition we attempt to give to our portrait of the Founder, the more we lose firm foothold upon historical testimony and are carried aloft into the region of ideal fiction. One can scarcely avoid

answering this question in the affirmative when one glances at the vital differences in the so-called historical results obtained by the different authors of Lives of Christ. Can we indeed expect that it should be otherwise, when we reflect that the earliest records betray the most evident tokens that in them history is interwoven with ideal motives, whether of legend or of apologetics or of dogmatic speculation? Jewish prophecy, Rabbinic teaching, Oriental gnosis, and Greek philosophy had already mingled their colours upon the palette from which the portrait of Christ in the New Testament Scriptures was painted. And so all that can be determined with certainty from these writings is only that conception of Christ which was the object of the faith of the early Christian communities and their teachers. It is true that the reminiscences of the first disciples concerning the life and death of their Master have contributed a most important element to this conception, which was from the first very complicated and many-sided, an

element indeed which, although it formed the nucleus round which all crystallised, was nevertheless only one element among many others. But the question as to how much of the New Testament conception of Christ is due to genuine historical reminiscence, and how much is derived from other sources, is a problem which can never be solved with absolute certainty.

How then does it come about that the eyes of so many are blind to the recognition of a fact so indisputable as this? Without doubt it is because of the supposition, which in these days seems to be regarded as an axiom, that intimate knowledge of Christianity stands and falls with exact historical knowledge of the personality of its Founder. But is not this supposition again only an illusion? It is evident that the Christian religion and the Christian Church are based upon that early belief in Christ to which the New Testament and contemporary Christian literature bear witness. This alone is the established fact,

which is in no way affected however the answer to the question concerning the origin of this belief may fall. It makes no difference whether historical tradition concerning Jesus of Nazareth has contributed more or less to this belief, or whether this contribution has been direct or indirect, or even—which is of course most improbable—if it has contributed nothing at all; the content of that belief, and consequently the essential character of Christianity, abide the same.

It follows therefore that scientific theology cannot remain true to her function—the investigation of the nature of Christianity—if, instead of inquiring into the whole content of the New Testament idea of Christ, she emphasises only the phases of that conception which are acceptable to the thought of to-day; if she overlooks all other phases and adds much of her own invention in order to construct an ideal of Christ in accord with modern taste. Such procedure is in these days most common and in great favour—who

is there that does not know the long succession of romances commencing with Renan's *Life of Jesus*? who does not commend Harnack's *What is Christianity?* It is true that these works may claim a certain practical merit in that they have been able to awaken interest in religion and enthusiasm for moral ideals among many of the indifferent. Only let us guard ourselves from the great mistake of imagining that the portraits of Christ drawn in these works—each differing in accordance with the differing disposition of the author, each besides more or less affected by modern ideals—represent the result of genuine historical research, and bear to the ancient portrait the relation of truth to falsehood. We must, in all modesty and honour, allow that both the modern and the ancient are alike creations of the common religious spirit of their times; that they have sprung from the natural craving of faith to fix and to illustrate the principle of its life in a typical form. The distinction in both corresponds to the difference of the times;

in one case we have the simple epic of myth, in the other the romance of sentiment and reflection. To ask which of the two is the more true were as useless as to ask the same question concerning Homer's *Odyssey* or Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messiah*. To the men of old the Christ of modern thought would have been incomprehensible and therefore untrue; while to the mind of to-day simple faith in the antique mythical epic is no longer possible. But because we can no longer share in the simple belief of ancient days and accept myth as historical reality, are we therefore to regard it as mere delusion and superstition? That indeed would be an error, which, though it was pardonable in the times of rationalism, ought to be quite impossible for minds trained in the historic method of the science of to-day. Surely myths and the corresponding rites and ceremonies in which the mythical idea finds dramatic, free, living, and continuous presentation are by far the most original and forcible

form of expression of the peculiar genius of every religion, and are therefore of the greatest significance for the investigator of the history of religion; they are in fact his ultimate source of information.

But of course, if the import and significance of the early Christian myths is to be understood, these must be considered not simply in the isolation of Christian tradition, but in relationship with and in dependence upon the myths and legends of universal religious history. The sphere of comparative religion, I am convinced, offers to the theology of the twentieth century a rich field of labour, whose culture will result in the clearing up of many problems to which Biblical exegesis and criticism have so far found no satisfactory solution. By this means we shall come to a clearer comprehension of the character of those realistic conceptions and expressions of ancient thought, which are so foreign to us moderns that we always tend to refine them away to mere symbolism; and our eye for the psycho-

logical motives and the historical background of legend will become keener. Of course we stand to-day still in the very beginnings of a science whose sphere is of such wide extent. If in spite of this I venture to lay before you a tentative experiment in its method in the following investigation of the primitive conception of Christ in the light of the history of religion, I do so in hope of your kind forbearance, and with the intention of paying a tribute of gratitude to the learned scholars of Holland, who in this very science of comparative religion stand pre-eminent in merit—in place of all others I mention only our friend Tiele, whose name can never be forgotten.

I

CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD

From the very beginning it was the belief of the Christian community that Jesus was the Son of God, but as to the degree and the significance of this Divine Sonship opinion was at first very divided. We can distinguish at least three meanings of the phrase "Son of God," each of which has its parallels partly in Jewish, partly in Gentile religious history.

1. According to the most ancient opinion, the man Jesus Christ was raised to be the Son of God by a divine act of adoption which was at first connected with the Resurrection from the dead and the Ascension to Heaven, and afterwards with the voice from Heaven at the Baptism, when by the descent of the Spirit

He was endowed with miraculous Messianic power. Accordingly "Son of God" did not yet imply that His nature was supernatural, but only that to Him had been given the office and power of the Messiah, that is, of the divinely appointed king of the people of God.

2. But parallel with this view which prevailed in the primitive Church there ran another conception which already obtained a footing in the Gentile Churches at a very early date. It derived its origin from the Apostle St Paul, who taught that Jesus was the Son of God because a spiritual personality, pre-existing in Heaven, had become incarnate in Him. This Christ-Spirit St Paul had not yet of course thought of as God, but as the peculiar first-born son and express image of God, and moreover as the archetype of mankind, the heavenly ideal man (the second man from Heaven of 1 Cor. xv. 47) who was destined from the beginning to appear in earthly form that He might

redeem mankind from the curse of sin, of the law, of death. But the mediator of redemption must have been already from the beginning the mediator of creation; hence He is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews "the very image of the substance of God, upholding all things by the word of his power" (i. 3), and in the Epistle to the Colossians, "the first-begotten of all creation, in whom, and through whom, and to whom all things have been created, in whom all things consist" (i. 15 *f.*). St John's Gospel however closes and completes this cycle of thought with the teaching that "the Logos, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were created, in whom was the life and light of men," became flesh in Jesus (i. 1 *ff.*). Accordingly, Christ is the Son of God no longer simply because of the adoption and apotheosis of the man Jesus, but because in Him has been perfected the incarnation of that divine nature, which as the Logos, that is as the personal Word, had been

from the beginning of the world the mediator of all divine revelation.

Finally these two conceptions of the incarnation of a God and of the apotheosis of a man were combined in a third view, that Christ was the Son of God because He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, and so, although human because of His mother, He was yet Son of God in the most complete physical sense of the word. This view arose in the second century among Christians of Gentile origin, and soon became the most popular tradition.[1]

To these separate ideas concerning the Divine Sonship of Christ Jesus[2] close parallels

[1] St Matt. i. 18–25 and St Luke i. 34 *f.* Only in these two passages of the New Testament, the latter of which does not probably belong to the original text, is this tradition mentioned. It belongs therefore to the latest elements of the New Testament conception of Christ.

[2] For a more complete discussion and development of the sketches of the New Testament conception of Christ, both here and in the following pages, I refer once for all to my book, *Das Urchristentum, seine Schriften und Lehren,* 2nd edit., 1902.

are found partly in Judaism, partly and still more completely in Gentile religious history.

The adoptionist theocratic idea of the Divine Sonship of the Messiah can be clearly traced back to the old Israelitish belief in the intimate connection of the Davidic kingship with Jahweh the nation's God. The prophetic author of the Books of Samuel makes God say to David, "To thy seed I will establish the kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son, so that if he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I withdrew it from him that went before thee; rather thine house shall be made sure for ever before me" (2 Sam. vii. 13 *ff.*). Trusting in this covenant of Jahweh with the royal house of David, the pious king of the second Psalm, amid the hostile plottings of the rulers of the world against Jahweh and His anointed, finds consolation in the certainty that God has set His king upon Sion, and has said to him, "Thou art my son, to-

day have I begotten thee [*i.e.* established thee as king]. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 6 *ff.*). In this sense the Jews hoped for the anointed king of the happy future, the Messiah, who, as Son of David, would be therefore Son of God—that is, His chosen and beloved client and vassal. But besides this adoptionist conception, which still prevails in the Psalms of Solomon of the era of Pompey, another conception makes its appearance in the apocalyptic literature of later Judaism. According to this conception, the Messiah is no mere man, a son of David, but a mysterious spirit-nature proceeding from the secret places of the Heavens. In the Similitudes of the Book of Enoch (the first century B.C.) the Messiah is described as "the Chosen One," "the Son of Man," who was hidden with God before the world was, whose

dominion endureth from eternity to eternity, whose power abideth from generation to generation, in whom dwelleth the spirit of wisdom and might, who will judge the secret things, and will execute vengeance on kings and mighty men, but will deliver the Saints and the righteous.—Enoch (chap. xlv–li.). Also in the Apocalypse of Ezra (chap. xiii.) the seer perceives as it were a man rise out of the sea and fly upon the clouds of Heaven; he sees him destroy the armies of the enemy with fire proceeding from his mouth, while he releases the scattered Israelites from captivity and leads them back to their native land. This vision is then interpreted to the seer:—"This man rising from the midst of the sea is he whom the Most High hath kept a great season, by whom He will deliver His creation. Like as one can neither seek out nor know what is in the deep of the sea, even so can no man upon earth see my Son, or those that be with him, but until the time of his day" (*i.e.* of his revelation as the world's Judge and Saviour).

Accordingly the "deep of the sea," out of which the Saviour the Son of God rises, seems to be only a type of the mysterious secret place where he is hidden from the beginning; we are not indeed told expressly that the place is Heaven, but we may conclude this from the words which tell of his "flying upon the clouds of Heaven" (xiii. 3), and of "those that be with him" (xiii. 52) at his coming, which companions must be understood to be either angels or righteous men of old days who had been translated into Heaven to dwell with the Son of God until the fulness of time (xiv. 9). It is evident, therefore, that the Apocalypse of Ezra, like the Parables of Enoch, regards the coming Saviour as this Son of God and Son of Man pre-existent in Heaven until the time of His appearing. It is no doubt difficult to reconcile this view with the words of chap. xii. 32, where it is said that the Christ will spring from the seed of David, and of chap. vii. 29, "After these years [a rule of four hundred years] shall my Son Christ die,

and all that have the breath of life." It is difficult to reconcile this discrepancy of statement; it can indeed only be explained by supposing that the author of this Apocalypse hesitated between the later conception of Messiah as heavenly and pre-existent, and the older view in which he was regarded as the earth-born Son of David. The idea of an incarnation of the heavenly Son of God and Son of Man in the body of an earth-born son of David, which would have united these two conceptions which existed side by side in later Judaistic thought, was never adopted in the circles of Judaism; but it suggested itself so naturally that it is no matter of wonder that in Christianity such a belief made its appearance at a very early date, indeed with St Paul.

The same significance which the heavenly Son of God and Man has in the Apocalypses of later Judaism is ascribed in the philosophy of Alexandrian Judaism to a Mediating Being, who is sometimes called "Wisdom,"

sometimes "Logos" (Reason and Word). In the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon (whose author was a Jew of Alexandria of the first century B.C.) Wisdom is described as a Spirit with God, yet distinct from Him, mediating His revelation in the creation, preservation, and government of the world, partly person, partly subtile matter which divisible as the air permeates the universe; like the World-Spirit of Heraclitus and the Stoics which was partly Universal Reason, partly first material principle of existence (*Urstoff*, *Urfeuer*), but related also to the Archangel Vohu-mano (Good Thought) of Zarathustrism, who stands by the side of Ahura as the chief minister of his will.[1] This Hellenistic hypostasis of the Divine Wisdom is partly the metaphysic principle of the creation and ordered existence of the universe, partly the agent and mediating instrument of the historical revelation of God in the

[1] *Cf.* Stave, *Einfluss des Parsismus auf das Judentum*, pp. 205 *ff.*

religion of Israel, and above all in those pious souls which she makes friends and children of God and raises to eternal life in fellowship with Him (*Wisdom*, iii. 1 *ff.*, v. 16 *ff.*, vi. 12 *ff.*). Thus in this conception the Judæo-Hellenistic author has endeavoured to combine the monistic speculations of Greek philosophy with the positive faith in Revelation which is the characteristic of Jewish theism. The Alexandrian philosopher Philo[1] followed in his footsteps. He bridged over the gulf that yawned between the world of sense and the infinitely lofty, unknowable, unnameable God by means of "Powers," which he also calls "Ideas" and "Angels," among which he distinguishes six as chief, who, like the six Amshaspands of the Zarathustric religion, guard the throne of God and act as His ministers in the government of the universe. First among these mediatory "Powers" stands

[1] I refer here to my discussion of Philo in *Urchristentum*, 2nd edit., ii. 25–54, where will be found quoted the passages of Philo upon which this sketch is based.

the "Logos," who also appears as the essential source of the others, and accordingly as the central mediator of all divine action and revelation. Philo calls him "the eldest, the first-born son of God, the oldest angel, the beginning, the word and the name of God, His image and the archetype of mankind." As mediator of the divine revelation, he is already concerned with the creation of the world, partly as the idea of ideas after whose pattern the universe is formed, partly as the creative power by which all things are called into existence. He is thus like the Platonic idea the metaphysic principle of form, and also the principle of existence like the Logos of the Stoics; but in distinction from these philosophic principles the Logos of Philo is also a self-existent, half-personal mediator, the oldest creature of God, very nearly allied to the archangels of the Jewish and Persian religions. It is in this latter character that he is the instrument of the whole historical revelation of God in Israel,

the active agent in all the theophanies of the Old Testament—those, for instance, of the patriarchal history—and more especially in the giving of the Law by Moses, to whom the Logos is brought into such close relationship that the conception of incarnation is almost suggested though it is never really taught. But also the Manna the heavenly bread of the wilderness, the water from the cloven rock, the flame of fire in the cloud that accompanied the camp of Israel, according to Philo, were all manifestations of the Logos; and herein it is betrayed that the original source of the conception lies in the animistic ideas of early popular thought. As the World-Reason of the Stoics was personified in Hermes the messenger of the gods, and as in the Egyptian god Thot[1] the magical creative word of Ammon-Ra, in Vohu-mano the creative

[1] Thot was identified by the Greeks with Hermes, and the latter was, in Stoic theology, made the manifestation of the divine wisdom. The relationship of this Logos-Hermes with the Logos-Christ was already noticed by the old apologists. *Cf.* Justin, *Apol.*, i. 21.

wisdom of Ahura, and in the Babylonian Nabu the word of destiny of Marduk took the form of divine mediating personalities, so in like manner Philo's Logos had its origin in the identification of the personified creative wisdom and revealing word of Jahweh with the World-Reason of the Stoics; thus it combined within itself the attributes of the principle of existence and thought, of the personal mediator of revelation, and of the ideal man; as son, image, and ambassador of God, the Logos is also the high-priest, intercessor for, and advocate (paraclete) of mankind.

Among Gentile peoples the idea of divine sonship was common and widespread, and that not simply in the case of mythical characters, but also in the case of historical personages of eminence, more especially of rulers and sages. In Egypt, from the earliest days up to the time of the last Pharaohs, the king was regarded as an incarnation of the deity;[1] he was addressed by the name of the great and merciful god

[1] Wiedermann, *Die ägyptische Religion*, pp. 92 *f.*

Horus, sacrifices were offered to him, prayer was directed to him, and it was believed that he himself fulfilled the prayer, or that he at least presented it before the heavenly gods, his fathers and mothers, with whom he lived in unbroken intercourse; indeed the Egyptian kings actually offered prayer to themselves, or rather to the divine genius (Ka) incarnate within themselves. For example we find a prayer addressed to King Meneptah which runs as follows:—"Thou, O king, art the perfect image of thy father the sun which rises in the heavens. Thy beams pierce even into the earth's secret recesses. Every place is full of thy goodness. The words of thy lips are law in every land. As thou restest in thy palace thou hearest what is said in every country. Thou hast millions of ears. Thine eye is bright above all the stars of heaven, it sees what is done in secret,—O merciful lord, creator of the breath of life!" Also in Babylon,[1] from the time of Sargon I., the founder of

[1] Radau, *Early History of Babylon*, pp. 308 *ff.*

the empire, the kings were accounted emanations of the Godhead; Sargon's son Naramsin called himself "God of Agade, lord of the orb of heaven." Afterwards for some time titles of this description seem to have dropped out of use. They return, however, with the kings of the fourth dynasty of Ur, who all prefixed to their names the sign for god (Dingir), built temples to their own honour, set up their statues in different sanctuaries, suffered sacrifice to be offered to their genius, and established the first and fifteenth days of every month as festival days holy to themselves.

This belief in the divine descent of kings was so firmly rooted in the Eastern mind that it was transferred even to foreign conquerors and rulers. When Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian and Egyptian Empires, he permitted himself to be styled the son of the Egyptian god Ammon-Ra; and among the inheritors of his empire his example was followed by the kings of Egypt and partly also by the kings of Syria. It was therefore

natural that in later days the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire should have preceded the West in paying divine honours to the emperors. In the East there was no hesitation in worshipping with public rites the living emperor as god, *i.e.* as an incarnation of the Godhead, while in the West there was greater reserve in this matter.[1] It is true that in Rome since the time of Augustus divine honour was ascribed to the "genius" of the emperor; but most of the emperors of the first century did not dare to assign to themselves the title of god. Only after their death were they elevated to the throne of the gods and received the title *divus*. Nor did the honour fall to all without discrimination, but only to those whom the Senate accounted worthy of this apotheosis, this *consecratio*. And thus in the West the divinity of the emperor signified an apotheosis or elevation of the deceased to

[1] Beurlier, *Le culte impérial*, p. 52; Boissier, *La religion romaine*, i. 163. *Cf.* below (Section V.) the hymns to Augustus.

divine honour because of his own personal merit, while in the East it signified a real incarnation of the deity in each living emperor as such.

Most striking parallels to the account of the virgin-birth of Christ are found in pagan legend. Pythagoras was regarded by his disciples as an incarnation of Apollo, or as the son of that god.[1] Even in the lifetime of Plato, as we learn from the funeral oration pronounced by his nephew Speusippus, it was commonly reported among the Athenians that Perictione, the philosopher's mother, had conceived him from the god Apollo before her

[1] Jamblichus (*De Vita Pythagorica,* chap. ii.) recounts as an ancient legend that Pythagoras was the son of Apollo by Parthenis, the wife of Mnesarchus; but he adds that this story is not to be credited; that rather the soul of Pythagoras in a prior state of existence stood in the closest relationship to Apollo, and by him had been sent to mankind. But in chapter xix. we are told that Pythagoras regarded himself as the human manifestation of the god Apollo, who took human form in order that men might not be so amazed and terrified by the divine glory as to be unable to receive his teaching (*cf.* St John i. 14, and Barnabas v. 10).

marriage with her husband. Hence the Academy was wont to celebrate the memory of its founder on the birthday of Apollo. It was believed concerning Alexander the Great that he was the son of Zeus, who had visited his mother Olympias in the form of a serpent before King Philip had consummated his marriage with her. Among the Romans Scipio Africanus and Augustus were regarded as sons of Apollo. The Pythagorean teacher and miracle-worker Apollonius of Tyana was accounted by his countrymen a son of Zeus. Simon Magus proclaimed himself to be more than human, and to have been born from a virgin mother. The common motive of legends of this kind, many of which were current in the Græco-Roman world, has been quite correctly discerned by Origen (*Contra Celsum*, i. 37). It was believed that a man endowed with wisdom and power beyond the measure of ordinary men must also have derived the principle of bodily existence from a higher and diviner seed. In an age which had as

yet no conception of natural laws, and whose phantasy was nourished upon manifold tales concerning demi-gods and sons of the gods, it was most natural to explain a personality of uncommon greatness by tracing back its origin to a miraculous birth and divine fatherhood.

But the most noteworthy parallel to the Christian legend is afforded in the similar legend of Buddhism, for here also the idea of the incarnation of a heavenly pre-existent Being in the historic founder is combined with the idea of his virgin-birth. The legendary biography of Buddha, *Lalita Vistara*—which was translated into Chinese in 65 A.D., and is therefore certainly pre-Christian,[1] — begins with the former life of the Buddha in heaven. Here he appears in the assembly of the gods and instructs them concerning "the law," *i.e.* the saving and eternal truth. He then announces

[1] Foucaux, *Le Lalita Vistara*, translated into French from the Sanscrit, I. VIII. My sketch and quotations are taken from this translation, which is acknowledged to be the best.

his purpose to descend into the womb of an earthly woman and to be born as man, that he may bring salvation to the world. The sons of the gods embrace his feet, weeping as they cry, "O noble man, if thou abidest not here this dwelling-place of heaven will lose its glory and brightness." He, however, appoints them a successor, and formally consecrates him as a future candidate for the office of Buddha by removing his own tiara and placing it upon his head, saying, "O noble Man, it is thou that after me wilt be clothed with the perfect intelligence of a Buddha" (chap. v.; Foucaux's Trans., I. 40). Thus the technical term for the heavenly nature of the Buddha, which presupposes the individual incarnations, is "Man" (*Purusha*) or "Great Man" (*Mahapurusha*), also "Victorious Lord" (*Cakravartin*). Whether these expressions imply some connection with the god Vishnu, as Senart thinks,[1] may be left undecided; what interests us is the relationship of this conception with the

[1] Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, chaps. i. and ii.

Judæo-apocalyptic term for the heavenly pre-existent Messiah, "Son of Man" or "Man" (Daniel vii. 13, Enoch and Ezra); with the Pauline "second man from Heaven"; with the Gospel name for Messiah, "Son of Man"; with the teaching of the Ophite Gnostics concerning the threefold Godhead, consisting of the First Man or Father, the Second Man or Son, and the Holy Spirit or the Mother of the Living (Irenæus, *Adv. Hæreses*, l. 30); finally and more especially, with the teaching of the Elkesaite Gnostics, which also lies at the foundation of the Clementine Homilies, in accordance with which the heavenly Christ-Spirit, the king of the world to come, first became man in Adam, then in Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and at last by a miraculous virgin-birth in Jesus, while still further embodiments of this Spirit are expected in the future, in order that the world, sunk in darkness, may again and again be delivered by the true Prophecy (Hippolytus, *Philoso-*

phumena, ix. 10; Epiphanius, *Hær.*, xxx. 53). It is not yet possible to determine how far the Indian doctrine of the incarnations (*avatars*) of the "Great Man" in the enlightened teachers or Buddhas of different epochs and the Judæo-Christian doctrine of the Man from Heaven are historically dependent upon one another. I would only note that the Elkesaite and Clementine doctrine of the separate incarnations of the heavenly Spirit in Adam, the patriarchs, and Jesus seems to have such an astonishing likeness to the Indian doctrine that one can scarcely doubt that here at least is a case of direct connection; and such connection is the more probable in that the Elkesaite Gnosis was first taught by an Eastern Persian or Parthian about the year 100 A.D., for at that time India and Eastern Persia were in intimate communication with one another. We do not of course know how long before this time Indian influences had worked their way into Western Asia, and we must therefore

for the present confine ourselves to establishing the fact of the parallelism between the Buddhist "Great Man" and the Judæo-Christian "Son of Man" without attempting to maintain that these ideas are historically interdependent.

The legend of the *Lalita Vistara* proceeds to relate how the queen Maya sought permission from her husband, King Suddhodana of Kapilavastu, to withdraw for a period from wedded life, in order to practise in strict retirement the life of an ascetic. During her fast in the springtime, when the constellation Puchya stood in the heavens, it came to pass that she saw in her dream a white elephant enter into her body, doing her no hurt. She related the dream to her husband, who asked of the augurs an interpretation. These prophesied that great gladness was about to come to them, for the queen would bear a son, who would be either a mighty ruler or a perfect saint, a Buddha and Saviour of the world. When after ten months she had brought

forth her son in a birth painless and undefiled, the new-born child at once cried out with the voice of a lion:—"I am the noblest, the best thing in the world! This is my last birth; I will put an end to birth, to old age, to sickness, to death!" At this instant the earth quaked and heavenly music was heard, a supernatural light filled all quarters of the universe and put darkness to flight. All creation was filled with the highest ecstasy of joy, and was delivered from all the bonds of passion and ignorance; the pain of the diseased was relieved, hunger and thirst ceased, the drunkards became sober, the insane came to a right mind, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the maimed were made whole, the poor became rich, the bound were set at liberty, the sufferings of every creature, even of those in hell, came to an end. Then came the hosts of the gods and spirits of heaven and paid homage to the Buddha-child and his mother, offering gifts, costly spices, garments and ornaments; the highest of the gods appeared

in the form of young Brahmins and uplifted a psalm of praise:—"Happy is the whole world, for he is really born—he who brings salvation, the restorer of peace on earth. He has appeared who by the glory of his merit will dim sun and moon and chase darkness utterly away. The blind see, the deaf hear, the deranged come to reason. The vice inherent in nature no longer vexes and disturbs, for the whole universe is full of good will. Gods and men can from henceforth approach one another without enmity, for he is the leader of their pilgrimage" (*Lalita Vistara*, I. 78–88). At that time there lived in the Himalayas a great seer, Asita, who perceived from wondrous signs in the heavens that a prince was born of exalted destiny either as a kingly ruler or as a saint and saviour. He came to Kapilavastu, he entered into the royal palace to see the new-born child, and recognised upon him the thirty-two signs of the "Great Man" (the incarnation of the heavenly Buddha). After he had seen this,

the seer Asita began to weep and sigh deeply. When the king inquired whether he foresaw some peril to the young prince Siddhartha, he replied:—"No; I weep not for him, but for myself, because I am old and feeble; but this young prince will be clothed with the perfect wisdom of a Buddha, and then for the salvation and joy of the world as well as of the gods will he teach the law whose beginning, middle, and end is virtue—in its fullest, clearest sense will he set it in the light. And when they have heard it from his mouth, all creatures observing the laws of their development will be completely delivered from birth and old age, from disease and care, from mourning, from pain and sufferings of all kinds; those that are inflamed with the fire of passion will he refresh with the water of the good Law; those who are ensnared in darkness and wander in the way of evil, he will lead by the right way of salvation (*Nirvana*); those who are bound by the chains of natural corruption will he release from their fetters; in

the blind, whose eye is darkened by the thick mist of ignorance, will he open the eye of wisdom; countless creatures will he deliver from the raging sea of this life and will guide them and grant them entrance into Immortality. As for us, we shall not live to know this deliverer most precious! For this I weep and sigh, because I have no hope of attaining to the deliverance from disease and passion" (*Lalita Vistara*, I. 91–94).

No one can fail to be struck with the manifest likeness of these Buddhist legends to the story of the childhood of Jesus as related in the Gospels, more especially in the Gospel of St Luke. But we find also much that runs parallel to the tale in St Luke ii. 41–52, concerning the visit of Jesus to the Temple when He was twelve years old. When the Prince Siddhartha was brought into the school, his superior knowledge of the whole sixty-four writings of Indian wisdom astonished his teachers and put them to the blush. Once when he had gone into the fields to watch

the work of tilling,[1] he fell into an ecstasy of pious meditation under the shadow of a tree; five foreign sages or saints (*richis*) passed that way, and perceived from the halo of glory which streamed from the future Buddha that he must be a son of a god, if not the incarnation of the sun-god himself, and they foretold his future career as teacher of the law, as the light and saviour of the world. In the meantime his absence was noticed at home; when the king asked whither he had gone, none could tell, and they began to search for him everywhere. At last he was found under the tree, whose shadow had not moved during the whole day, surrounded by the saints, bright with majestic light like the moon amid the stars. To his father, trembling at the sight, the son speaks with the voice of Brahma, full of authority: "Cast aside thy

[1] According to another version this happened at the spring festival, when the king was wont to draw the first furrow with a golden plough. It was curiosity to see this festival that tempted the nurse to leave the young prince by himself.

ploughing,[1] O my father, and seek higher." He thus blames his father's lack of higher perception and aspiration, just as the youthful Jesus acts towards His mother in St Luke ii. 49. Thereupon he returned with his father to the city and dwelt there, accommodating himself to the customs of the world, yet in spirit busied with the thought of his departure to become perfect and pure existence (Buddha).—*Lalita Vistara*, I. 115, 118–122.

How deeply the thought of continuous incarnations of the divine spirit in historical personages is rooted in the mind of the Asiatic peoples is shown in the formation of the religious sect of Babism in Persia[2] even in the nineteenth century. Its founder, Mirza Ali Mohammed, early in his life made his appearance as an enthusiastic reformer of the

[1] This presupposes that the ploughing ceremony of the spring festival was the cause of the loss of the child.

[2] Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies de l'Asie centrale*, pp. 145 *ff.*

official Mohammedan religion and an impassioned opponent of the degenerate hierarchy, and soon gathered round him a large circle of followers who regarded him with fanatical devotion and veneration. This took place in the year 1844. The founder claimed unlimited authority, and called himself the "Bab," that is, the "gate" through which alone a man could come to the knowledge of God. He believed that he was the highest embodiment of the divine breath or word, whose former manifestations had appeared in Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. He taught that all these divine messengers are alike, are indeed really only different manifestations of the same divine essence, in so far as they all have God as their common and direct origin, and are bound closer with Him and return more quickly to Him than other men. All that distinguishes them from one another is the form of the divine manifestation, conditioned in each case by the time of its appearance; just as Jesus was a reproduction of Moses in

accordance with the demands of a new era, so the Bab is a reproduction of Mohammed. But although he is for the time the highest manifestation of the divine spirit, yet he is not the last manifestation; he has successors as well as predecessors. In this assured conviction the Bab met a martyr's death with a calm and joyful spirit, and prophesied that the spirit of God which dwelt in him would immediately after his death pass to one of his disciples — "he whom God will show will continue the work of Bab, and will free the world from the unrighteousness which now rules in it." As a matter of fact, the sect continued to exist under new leaders after the execution of the Bab at Tebriz in 1850, and has still in these days many adherents. One of its later leaders, Beha, who died at Acre in 1892, was regarded by his adherents as an incarnation of the Deity, and was even called "god" and "king or creator of gods."[1] Another party raised a

[1] Brown, *The New History of the Bab*, 1893, p. 359.

protest against such immoderate and irrational claims, thus affording an opportunity for the discussion of the old question—What is the relation of the Divine essence to its human form of manifestation?

II

CHRIST AS THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN

It was from the beginning the conviction of the Christian community that Christ was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. This faith came to expression in many different forms:—

1. Before His entrance upon His mission Christ had victoriously withstood the temptations of Satan. According to the narratives of the Evangelists St Matthew (chap. iv. 1–11) and St Luke (chap. iv. 1–13), this moral conflict between Christ and the devil comprised three assaults, in each of which Christ by the mighty weapon of the Word of God came off victorious; at last, we are told, the devil left Him (according to St Luke at

least for a season), and the angels came and ministered to Him (St Matt. iv. 11; St Luke iv. 13; St Mark i. 13).

2. Christ proved His superiority to and His conquest of the devil by driving out devils from the possessed and the diseased (St Mark iii. 22 *f.*; St Matt. xii. 24–29).

3. The time will come when Christ, at His Second Coming to judge the world, will for ever make an end of the power of Satan. This final victory over the spirit of evil is in the Revelation of St John divided into two acts: —The King of Kings descends from Heaven with His host of angels; by the sword which proceeds from His mouth He subdues the hostile, godless world-powers that are arrayed against Him; then the devil is bound and cast into the abyss of Hell, where he abides in prison under lock and seal for a thousand years. Until the end of these thousand years Christ and the martyrs who have risen again will reign; then the devil will be loosed from his prison, and will come forth to deceive

the nations of the earth, more especially Gog and Magog, and will gather them together to war against the saints; but his hosts will be destroyed by fire from Heaven, and Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented for ever and ever (Rev. xix. 11–xx. 10).

Parallels to the Gospel story of the Temptation are found in Buddhist and Iranian legends. The Buddhist story is told in different versions. The following is a summary of the discursive narrative found in *Lalita Vistara*, chap. xxi. :— After Prince Siddhartha had left the palace of his father and had lived as a monk for five years, he betook himself to the tree of knowledge, that in deepest meditation he might attain to perfect wisdom and Buddhahood. As now Mara, the lord of carnal pleasure and all evil, knew that his reign would be brought to an end by Buddha, he summoned all his hosts of evil spirits to war against his dangerous enemy. They cast at him, as he sat under the tree of knowledge, mountains and flames

of fire and weapons of every kind, but all their missiles turned into flowers falling at his feet, or hanging in garlands on the tree above him. Then the hostile demon, full of rage and spite, spake to the Buddha: Arise, king's son, and enjoy the kingdom, for by what merit hast thou attained salvation (*i.e.* Buddhahood)? Buddha appealed to the countless sacrifices which he had presented for the good of all creation in his former states of existence; he called upon the earth to bear him witness. Amid earthquake and terrific crashing the goddess of the earth appeared and spake to him: It is indeed, O Great Man, just as thou hast said; but thou thyself art become the highest thing in the universe, though it includes even the gods. Thereupon all the demons fled like jackals before the roar of the lion. Now the fiend called upon his daughters the Apsaras, and commanded them to tempt the Buddha by displaying all their charms before him. But he abode insensible to all their allurements, and taught them concerning the vanity and

peril of deceitful pleasure with such earnestness that they withdrew in shame and acknowledged the impregnability of his virtue and the sublimity of his perfect wisdom. Then drew near the good spirits of the tree of knowledge and praised the victory of Buddha over the fiend. Yet once again Mara returns to the assault with the demand that Buddha should yield to him, the lord of the air and the visible world, since the goal of his endeavour was too difficult to reach. Buddha however answered: Art thou the lord of the air and the visible world, so am I the lord of the law, and I will attain to knowledge in spite of thee.— Thus the saint withstood the temptations of the evil one; thus in the face of all his terrors, as well as of his allurements, he steadfastly upheld his conviction of his high destiny and his purpose to fulfil it by the way of self-renunciation and knowledge; and thus immediately afterwards, under the tree of knowledge, he reached perfect enlightenment; he became "Buddha."

The Persian legend also tells of a temptation of the prophet Zarathustra by the evil spirit Ahriman, who suggested to him the thought: "Renounce the good law of the worshippers of Mazda, and thou shalt win the power which Zohak, the ruler of the nations, possessed." But Zarathustra answered: "No, I will never renounce the good law of the worshippers of Mazda, though even my body, my life, and my soul burst asunder; the word which Mazda teaches is my weapon, my best weapon!" Nor could the evil one withstand it. But as the final conqueror of the Satanic empire of Ahriman, the Iranian religion awaits a future deliverer Soshyans, in whom one may almost recognise a miraculous reappearance of Zarathustra himself, in that he is to be born of a virgin who has conceived from the seed of Zarathustra preserved in a well in which she bathes.[1] According to the expectation of the Iranian

[1] *Cf.* Hübschmann, "Parsische Lehre vom Jenseits und jüngsten Gericht" in *Jahrbücher für prot. Theol.*, 1879, p. 234; and Böcklin, *Die Verwandtschaft der jüdischchristlichen mit der parsischen Eschatologie*, pp. 91 *ff.*

religion, the appearance of this "Victorious Saviour" Soshyans will bring about the renewal of the world and the resurrection. This consummation will be preceded by an insurrection and conflict in the world of spirits. The hostile dragon Dahak, which the hero Feridan once conquered and bound in the mountain Demavend, will break loose from his fetters to bring evil upon the earth; but the hero Keresaspa will wake from his long slumber and will slay him. Then Soshyans will bring about the resurrection of all men, and will assign them their reward according to their works. The godless will be punished in Hell for three days and three nights; then all evil will be destroyed in a universal conflagration; Ahura and his archangels will overthrow their enemies, Ahriman and his evil spirits, in a final battle, and these will be utterly consumed in the metal melted by the great conflagration; while for the men who are purified Soshyans will prepare the cup of immortality.—This is the description of the Last Things given in chap.

xxx. of the *Bundehesh*, a theological treatise of the time of the Sassanids.[1] But in an ancient story of the Avesta,[2] Soshyans is already extolled as the conqueror of the evil spirits and as the renewer of the universe: "Kingly glory will cleave to Soshyans and his other friends, when the world is transfigured, when it is delivered from old age, from death, from decay and corruption, so that it prospers and flourishes continually, when all the dead rise again, when all life becomes immortal, when the world is restored at its wish, when pure good takes up its endless abode here upon earth, when also the lying spirit shall perish."

In chap. xii. of the Revelation of St John, the Christian editor has handed down to us a Jewish legend of a similar type. It tells of the persecution of the infant Messiah by the devil, who is afterwards defeated by the Archangel Michael. This is a legend which is not simply parallel to, but has its direct origin

[1] *Sacred Books of the East*, V. 120 *ff.*
[2] *Ibid.*, XXIII. 306.

in a heathen myth concerning the conflict between the gods of light and darkness. According to the tale of Greek mythology,[1] Leto, before she bore Apollo to Zeus, was persecuted by the earth-dragon Python, who sought to destroy the expected child, for an oracle had threatened that the child if he lived would bring mischief to Python. But the wind-god Boreas caught up the persecuted goddess and brought her to Poseidon, who prepared for her a place of refuge on the island of Ortygia, where the waves of the sea hid her from the sight of the persecutor. Here Leto gave birth to Apollo, who, even on the fourth day after his birth, was so strong that he slew the dragon Python on Mount Parnassus. The wide diffusion of this myth in Asia Minor is proved by coins bearing the figure of Leto as a fugitive. In the syncretistic circles of Jewish Hellenism it was

[1] In *Hyginus Fabulæ* (ed. Schmidt, p. 17). Dieterich, *Abraxas*, pp. 177 *ff.*, was the first to bring to notice this mythical background of Rev. xii.

expounded as referring to the coming Messiah, and in consequence naturally suffered some transformation. The main outlines, of course, remained the same: The persecution of the heavenly child (Messiah) and his mother (the ideal Israel) by the dragon (the devil), and her escape upon the wings of the wind (an eagle in the Jewish version) to a hidden place in the desert (instead of the island of the Greek story), and the part played by the water-flood, though it is different in each case; but in the Jewish form of the myth the defeat of the evil dragon is no longer assigned to the Messianic child who is caught up to God, but to the warlike Archangel Michael, who, as the guardian angel of Israel, plays to a certain extent the part of Messiah in the spirit-world; and besides the result of this conflict in Heaven is not the final destruction of the dragon—he is only cast down from Heaven to earth, where, having great wrath, he for a short period continues his hostility against the children of the woman

until the time comes that he is overthrown by Messiah. The simple heathen myth concerning the persecution and deliverance of the infant sun-god and his speedy victory over the hostile dragon of darkness, became more complicated in its Jewish version, because the final Messianic overthrow of the devil's reign upon earth belonged to the future, and could not therefore be assigned to the infant Messiah. Accordingly the conflict, in the Jewish version, must be divided into two acts, of which the first, the heavenly prelude whose hero is Michael, lies in the past, while the second, Messiah's final victory, is still reserved for the future. This Jewish form of the heathen myth rendered its transference to Jesus the Christ in the Christian Apocalypse the more simple, in that He likewise is to be fully revealed as the conqueror of Satan only at his Second Coming, while in the meantime He is caught away to the throne of God (by his ascension), safe from the assaults of his enemies.

This myth, the root of the apocalyptic

vision of Rev. xii., sends forth another shoot in the legend concerning the persecution and escape of the infant Christ in the second chapter of St Matthew's Gospel. Here the dragon of the myth, which became the devil in Revelation, now becomes Herod, the malignant king of the Jews, who plots against the life of the infant Messiah and commands the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem. Here also the mother escapes with the child, not however into the wilderness, but into Egypt, because the young Messiah must be called forth from the same land whence Israel once was led, that the word of the prophet (Hosea xi. 1) might be fulfilled. This legend has moreover many prototypes in tales concerning the heroes of old—in the exposure of the infant Moses and his rescue by the daughter of Pharaoh (Exodus ii.); in the similar tale concerning Sargon, the son of the Assyrian king, who was persecuted by his uncle and exposed in an ark of reeds on the river Euphrates, and was rescued and reared by

a water-carrier;[1] in the Indian myth concerning the god-man Krishna (the incarnation of the god Vishnu) and the malicious designs against him of his uncle King Kansa, who ordered all the children of the same age in his land to be slain, but Krishna escaped to certain poor shepherds who reared him.[2] Similarly Cyrus the young king of the Persians ought to have been slain by the order of his grandfather Astyages, but the shepherd entrusted to do the deed spared the child and brought him up as his own son.[3] Likewise we are told that before the birth of Augustus, because an oracle foretold the birth of a king of Rome, the Senate decreed that all males born that year should be slain, a decree which was disobeyed by the parents of Augustus.[4] But although all these legends have their ultimate source in nature-myths of the character of the Leto-Apollo myth, the

[1] Smith, *Early History of Babylon*, p. 46.
[2] Wheeler, *History of India*, I. 462 *f.*
[3] Herodotus, i. 108 *ff.*
[4] Suetonius, *Octavianus*, 94.

common motive of them all is easily recognised. They all place in clear light the abounding worth of the life of the great hero, by showing that from the very first his existence was the object of conflict between the powers of light and darkness. The life of the infant must declare as in a prelude what is to be the life-work of the hero ; in it also must be seen the victory of the divine principle of life and light over the hostile powers of the world.

III

CHRIST AS A WONDER-WORKER

Although Jesus himself had repelled the suggestion that He should work striking miracles, and had sharply rebuked the desire for these as a sign of a perverted mind (St Mark viii. 11*f.*; St Matt. xvi. 1–4), it was not possible but that the imagination of the faithful should deck the form of Christ with a rich garland of miracle. This was indeed the inevitable consequence of their belief in His Messianic office and His divine sonship; for the Messiah of Jewish expectation must repeat and surpass the wonders wrought by the men of God in the Old Testament, and it seemed only natural that the supernatural spirit, with which the Son of God was filled or to which He

owed His earthly existence, should declare itself in supernatural power even during the earthly life of Christ. The miracles of the Gospel history may be divided into two classes: miracles of knowledge and miracles of power.

1. Miracles of knowledge:—
   - (*a*) Wonderful insight into the heart of man. (St John ii. 25.)
   - (*b*) Foreknowledge of the future. (Prophecy of the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Second Coming.)
   - (*c*) Miraculous knowledge of events, both past and present, happening at a distance. (St John i. 48, iv. 17, xi. 14.)
2. Miracles of power:—
   - (*a*) Driving devils from the possessed.
   - (*b*) Cures of other diseases.
   - (*c*) Raising the dead.
   - (*d*) Miraculous power over matter and the forces of nature. (Multiply-

ing of the loaves, changing of water into wine, stilling of the storm.)

(*e*) Freedom from the limitations of space and of material existence. (Sudden disappearances and appearances, passage through closed doors, walking on the water, Ascension into Heaven. St John vi. 19 *ff.*; St Luke xxiv. 31, 36, 51; St John xx. 19, 26.)

All these miracles find countless parallels in the legends of pagan heroes and Christian saints. Let us here select only a few instances.

In Buddhist legend miracles of knowledge play a prominent part. Buddha knows not only his own previous births and lives with all their details, but also possesses similar knowledge respecting others who come into connection with him, he knows their merits and demerits in their previous states of existence, and often explains conversion to his

discipleship as being due to the influence of merit gained in a previous life (this is the form that the idea of predestination takes in Indian thought). He also sees into the thoughts of all creatures from the lowest to the highest: "All that passes through your soul is open before me. Others ye may deceive, but me ye cannot deceive."[1] When however at the beginning of his ministry, his opponents, incited by the devil Mara, demanded of him that he should prove his superiority to the saints hitherto revered by miracles wrought before the king and the people, he answered: "I do not teach my disciples that they should go and work miracles by means of supernatural power before the Brahmins, but this I teach them: Thus live, ye pious, that ye hide your good works and show your sins."[2] Nevertheless, in the same context, the legend proceeds to narrate how Buddha shamed and overcame his obstinate opponents by a succes-

[1] R. S. Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 190.

[2] Burnouf, *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme*, pp. 153 *ff.*

sion of the most astounding miracles. When the king, deceived by a false accusation, had ordered the hands and feet of his innocent brother to be cut off, Buddha heard from afar the prayer of the sufferer, and at once sent his favourite disciple to heal him by the repetition of the sacred formularies of the Buddhist law. Scarcely were the words spoken before the body of the prince was made whole, while he who was thus healed by Buddha's power at once showed that he also possessed supernatural powers, and entered into the discipleship of the Master. We are further told how a fire broke out in a house in which Buddha lodged, but went out of itself without doing any damage; how Buddha by stamping on the ground caused a fearful earthquake which shook all quarters of the earth; how the spirits of the air rained flowers upon him and played for him heavenly music; how Buddha, when sunk in deep meditation, elevated himself in the air, and how as he soared in the region of light the most wonderful flames of all colours streamed

from his body—such scenes of transfiguration occur again and again in the Buddhist legends.

In the West the first centuries of the Roman Empire were a period of the most extensive and absolute belief in soothsaying and miracle. The old tales of Heracles, Orpheus, Æneas, Romulus, Asclepius, and Pythagoras were related by poets and historians as traditional and therefore trustworthy histories, and were further developed to suit the taste of the readers. The historian Diodorus Siculus[1] says of Hercules that this hero, as was universally recorded, had spent his life in enduring great trials and dangers, that by his good deeds to mankind he might gain a share in immortality, and the author gives a detailed narrative of all the wondrous actions of Hercules until his final ascension to Olympus from the funeral pyre. Pausanias relates of Asclepius[2] that he, the son of Apollo and

[1] *Hist.*, i. 2, iv. 8–39.
[2] *Periegesis*, ii. 26 *f.* *ff.*

Coronis, was exposed as an infant by his grandfather, and was discovered by a shepherd who perceived from the brightness streaming from the child's face that there was something divine about him; whereupon the report spread that this divine boy could heal the sick and raise the dead. Again he relates that during a pestilence Asclepius came to Rome in the form of a serpent, and had continued his miracles of healing there for a hundred years. Legend also ascribes to him ten cases of raising the dead; but because he called Glaucus, the son of Minos, back to life, Jupiter smote the great physician with a thunderbolt and translated him to the gods. As the heavenly god of healing he still carried on his work at his sanctuaries, among which those at Epidaurus and Rome were the most celebrated as the resort of pilgrims. In the first centuries of the empire he was accounted the kindest, most humane of the gods; from him help was sought in all distress of body and soul; his temples were crowded with the votive offerings

and inscriptions of those who believed that they had received help from him. We are even told that he, like Serapis the Egyptian god of healing, appeared in bodily form to many sick folk.

The popular belief in miracle and supernatural revelation found zealous championship also among the philosophers of the Platonic and Stoic, Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic schools. They brought it into combination with their own doctrine concerning divine providence and mediating natures (dæmons); they understood how to employ its authority as a fulcrum by which to promote their own teaching. In these circles the old tales of Pythagoras, the founder of the famous politico-religious brotherhood, were cherished with especial affection, and were developed so as to present the ideal portrait of a prophet and wonder-worker in whom were mingled the human and the divine. According to the biography of Jamblichus he was not simply a son of Apollo but the bodily incarnation of that

god. Besides his wonderful prophetic insight (for a knowledge of his previous states of existence, reminding us of Buddha, is ascribed to him) we are told of a number of most astonishing miracles which he performed: that he healed sick people, put an end to a pestilence by means of magic, stilled the waves of the sea and of rivers so that his disciples could safely pass over them, while the spirit of the floods greeted him by name in a voice clear and audible to all; also that on one and the same day he was present with his disciples in two places separated by land and sea (Metapontum in Italy and Tauromenium in Sicily)—the same freedom from the limitations of space which often occurs in the legends of Buddha. But the Neopythagorean school was not satisfied with glorifying their ideal of the divinely human sage and wonder-worker in the person of their ancient founder; they must see it take new form in the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana (who died about 96 A.D.), whose biography was written by the rheto-

rician Philostratus at the command of the Empress Julia Domna (about 220 A.D.).[1] The author is able to relate a multitude of miracles of knowledge and of power wrought by his hero. He is said to have prophesied divers events of the future, such as the rebellion of Vindex against Nero, the short reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, the death of Titus, a shipwreck, and so forth. While in Ephesus he saw the assassination of Domitian at Rome. As he was conversing with friends he became suddenly silent, and looking forth with a fixed stare he cried out: "Strike him down, the tyrant!" Then he declared to his astonished friends: "Domitian has just been slain." Soon afterwards the news arrived that the assassination had taken place at that very hour. Apollonius also understood all the languages of mankind and of animals, and knew even the secret thoughts

[1] *Cf.* Baur's treatise, "Apollonius und Christus," in *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der alten Philosophie*, ed. Zeller, 1876.

of men. He delivered the city of Ephesus from a demon of pestilence, which he recognised under the form of a poor beggar, whom he ordered to be stoned, whereupon a large dog was found under the stones. In Corinth he unmasked a man-eating vampire in the bride of one of his disciples. While he was lecturing in Athens, his discourse was interrupted by the insolent laughter of a young man. Apollonius perceived that the youth was possessed, and he ordered the demon to depart and to give a visible sign of his departure. Whereupon the demon said that he would overturn the statue standing in the hall. The statue began at once to move and fell down, while the youth from that moment was healed and remained in his right mind. In Rome he met the funeral procession of a young maiden mourned by her bridegroom; he approached and bade the bearers stand still, as he wished to dry the tears of the mourners. All thought that he intended to speak some words of consolation, but he took hold of

the maiden and whispered over her some mysterious words; she then arose, began to speak, and returned to the house of her parents. The father wished to give a considerable sum of money as a sign of his gratitude for the renewed life of his child. Apollonius however would not receive it, but assigned it as a dower for the bride. The biographer adds that he leaves the question undetermined whether this was a case of real resurrection from the dead or whether the maiden only appeared to be dead (the same dilemma which remains open in the case of the New Testament stories of the raising of the daughter of Jairus and of the young man at Nain—St Mark v. 41 *f.* and St Luke vii. 12 *ff.*). All these and similar miracles of Apollonius were in their aim altruistic and beneficent; they ministered to the deliverance of the sufferers from evil of all kinds; yet some are narrated which had reference to the person of Apollonius himself—among others the following:—When at the command of Domitian he was cast, bound in

fetters, into prison, a friend asked him when he would again be free. He answered: "I give thee here a proof of my freedom," and shook off his fetters and again of his own free will replaced them. From this the disciple perceived his supernatural power. This miracle with its transparent symbolism—the superiority of the saint to all the power of a hostile world—reminds one of the miraculous release of the Apostles St Peter and St Paul from prison (Acts xii. 7, xvi. 26), and of the overthrow of the Roman cohort in Gethsemane at the word of Jesus (St John xviii. 6).

The tales of miracles wrought by Christian saints stand in line with these Pythagorean legends. The apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are full of the strangest miracles which they are reported to have performed before the heathen in proof of the truth of their preaching. For instance, according to the Acts of Peter,[1] that Apostle, when in Rome, drove out of a young man a devil, which at its exit

[1] Lipsius, *Apocryphe Apostelgeschichten*, II. 1.

overthrew and broke into pieces a statue of the emperor, but St Peter restored it again by the magic spell of holy water. Further, he brought a salted herring to life again, and restored sight to several blind widows; he caused a sucking infant to proclaim with the voice of a man the judgment that was coming upon Simon Magus, and by means of a dog with a human voice he challenged him to a contest in miracle. The magician volunteered to raise a dead man to life, and made his experiment upon a young man whom he had slain by means of magic; but he was only partly successful, since the man immediately died again. St Peter however, before the eyes of the Roman people and the Prefect of the city, raised three dead persons to new and healthy life, and besides healed many who were sick. And when Simon Magus wished to trump all these miracles by causing himself to ascend bodily into Heaven, his attempt was brought to nought by the prayer of the Apostle; as he soared aloft he fell to the

ground and was killed. Again, when Peter, at the instigation of his friends, was about to avoid martyrdom by flight, Christ met him near the city gate. Peter asked him, "Whither goest Thou?" He answered, "To Rome, to be crucified a second time." Peter at once returned, was condemned to be crucified, and in his humility begged that he might be fastened to the cross head downwards. As he thus hung crucified he comforted his mourning friends with a discourse concerning the mysteries of the cross, while angels surrounded him bearing garlands of roses and lilies. After his death he appeared oftentimes to his friends, exhorting them to constancy, and in a vision even to the Emperor Nero, to whom he gave a sound thrashing and a warning from henceforth to leave the Christians in peace. These reappearances of the martyrs for the comfort and encouragement of the sorrowing community form a very frequent, one might say constant, trait in the legends of the saints, and have no doubt a

basis of fact in real psychical experiences—visions and hallucinations.

Let us select from the abundant miraculous store of ecclesiastical legend two more instances—one from the time of the ancient Church, the other from the Middle Ages. St Augustine, in the last book of his work *De Civitate Dei* (XXII. chap. viii.), propounds the question—why is it that miracles such as those narrated in the Gospels no longer occur in these days? He answers—because now they are no longer so necessary as they were then, when they were intended to incite the world to faith; now, he who still requires a miracle in order to believe is himself a miracle, since he refuses to believe in spite of the acceptance of Christianity by the whole world. But, he proceeds, miracles are even now wrought in the name of Christ, whether through the sacraments or through the prayers or memoriæ of His saints; only the miracles of to-day are not so well known as those of the past. And then he recounts a succession of stories of miracles

that had happened in his own time and partly in his own immediate neighbourhood. In Milan the bones of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius were discovered through a revelation given to the Bishop Ambrose in a dream, and at the festival that celebrated the discovery a blind man received his sight in presence of the whole congregation. In Carthage he himself was eye-witness of a miracle performed upon his host Innocentius, who was suffering from a dangerous tumour for which he was about to undergo a surgical operation; but he was suddenly cured in answer to the fervent prayers of himself and his friends. In the same city a woman suffering from cancer of the breast was cured by a newly baptised infant, who signed the diseased place with the cross, the sign of Christ. A physician suffering from gout was relieved of his disease by baptism. Some sacred earth, which had been brought to Carthage from the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem, freed from ghosts a haunted house in that city, and

brought about the cure of a lame young man. In Hippo a maiden was delivered from a devil by being anointed with oil which a priest, who was praying for her, had sanctified with his tears. In the same town the prayer of a poor cobbler to the Twenty Martyrs, to whom Hippo paid special devotion, was miraculously answered. He found on the shore a large fish, and in its belly a gold ring; in this way the martyrs fulfilled his petition for means to obtain clothing. At the festival of the glorious martyr Stephen a blind woman was healed by flowers which had been blessed by the bishop. Flowers from the altar were laid at the head of the bed of an eminent heathen while he slept, and during the night he was moved to accept the baptism which he had hitherto constantly rejected with scorn. A boy who had been fatally injured by being run over by an ox-wagon was brought to the shrine of the martyr, and was at once restored to perfect soundness of body. Lastly, the same martyr raised several dead persons to life by

means of a garment sanctified by his relics, which was spread over the dead bodies, or when they were anointed with oil that had been similarly consecrated, or when they were brought to the holy place and prayer was offered over them. . . . . "Accordingly," concludes St Augustine, "even in these days many miracles occur which are wrought by the same God who wrought those of which we read in the Holy Scriptures, through whom He wills and as He wills, only they are not so well known."

We turn now to the legends concerning St Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Order of Minorites or Franciscans, who died in the year 1226 A.D. Bonaventura, the general of the Order, compiled an edition of the legends concerning the saint, which was published as his official biography in the year 1260 A.D. In this book the author records a number of miracles upon the evidence of the friends and first disciples of the saint, who were, we may suppose, eye-witnesses of the events. Francis

kissed the sores of a leper and immediately his leprosy vanished. In the wilderness he and his companions were fed with bread from heaven; during a long voyage he nourished a whole ship's crew from the contents of his wallet, which was ever miraculously replenished. Like Moses he brought water out of a rock, and like Jesus he changed water into wine of the best quality. Once when the brethren were met together, the saint, who was absent in the body, was seen hovering in the air and blessing the assembly with outstretched hands. St Francis was on terms of intimacy with the animals. He preached to the birds, and they listened to him attentively with outstretched necks. Once while he was preaching some swallows disturbed him with their noisy chattering; he bade them be silent, and at once they were quiet. He exhorted a wolf to give up slaughter; the beast, placing his paw in the saint's hand, vowed that he would reform, and from that moment he became a tame, domesticated animal. But most renowned of all is

the miracle of the stigmata. During the last period of his life the saint is reported to have borne in his hands, his feet, and his side the five wounds of Jesus in the form of scars which bled from time to time. The oldest records give differing accounts of the details of the origin and the nature of these stigmata; and as time went on the legend of this miracle developed until it related forty similarities between the life of St Francis and that of Jesus. Lastly, we are told of countless miracles of healing, of raising from the dead, of deliverance of shipwrecked sailors and others, all wrought by the power of the saint after his death. "So great was the veneration paid to his memory that it was commonly said of him: Exaudit quos non ipse audit Deus—he is thus more merciful than God Himself. This sounds blasphemous, but it is only the definite expression of the thought which lies behind the whole cult of saints."[1]

[1] Hase, *Kirchengeschichte*, II. 387.

IV

CHRIST AS THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH AND THE LIFE-GIVER

Christ is to the community of the faithful the Saviour because He has conquered death and Hell, has taken away the sting of death, and has brought life and immortality to light (1 Cor. xv. 55 *ff.*; 2 Tim. i. 10). In order to understand this belief in its proper and original significance, we must note that death for the ancient world was not a natural occurrence, but the result of the influence of supernatural causes. It was regarded either as the judicial penalty inflicted by an offended Deity—and that indeed upon the whole race of mankind since Adam's fall (Rom. v. 12 *ff.*)—or as the work of dæmonic powers that infected man

with the fatal poison of disease and sin, and thereby brought him under the power of Death, who as ruler of the underworld held souls in close bondage in his prison. Accordingly, the deliverance from Death was brought about—partly by means of the propitiatory offering of the vicarious death of the Son of God, who thus reconciled sinful man with God, redeemed him from the condemnation and curse of the law, and brought him within the sphere of the Divine Grace (Rom. iii. 24 *ff.*; 2 Cor. v. 19 *ff.*; Gal. i. 4, iii. 13); partly by means of the cleansing power of His sacred blood, which delivered mankind from the dæmonic pollution of sin and death (Heb. ix. 11 *ff.*, x. 14, 22, 29); partly because by His own death and resurrection He had deprived the lord of death, the devil, and the Satanic angels of their power over mankind (Heb. ii. 14; Col. ii. 15, i. 13 *f.*; 1 John iii. 8). According to the first and second views, the Resurrection of Christ is the divine acknowledgment of the propitiatory and purifying efficacy of His

death; according to the third view, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ[1] are together a practical proof of His victory over Death and Hades, whereby Christ has become for us the Prince of Life, its possessor, its surety, its mediator (Acts iii. 15; Rev. i. 18; St John xi. 25, iii. 13 *ff.*; 1 Pet. iii. 18 *ff.*; Eph. iv. 8 *ff.*).

The means whereby the ascended Christ imparts His life to His people are (1) faith in His name, which includes its open confession and invocation (Rom. x. 9 *ff.*; St John iii. 15 *ff.*, xx. 31, xvi. 23 *f.*); (2) baptism into His name (Acts ii. 38) as a washing of regeneration (Tit. iii. 5; St John iii. 5), a mystical purification (1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26), a participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. vi. 1 *ff.*); (3) the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. x. 16 *ff.*, xi. 23 *ff.*; St John vi. 51 *ff.*; Rev. iii. 20, xix. 9).

In the history of religion many parallels are

[1] The Ascension as the converse of the Descent into Hades was originally one with the Resurrection; both taken together express the exaltation of Christ into Heaven from the realms of death.

found to all these traits of the New Testament conception of Christ as the Saviour of the world. The belief that the innocent sufferings of the good form a vicarious sacrifice for the benefit of sinners is found for the first time in the exilic prophet Deutero-Isaiah (Is. liii.), and from the time of the Maccabees onwards it occupies a prominent position in the theology of the Pharisees. The Hellenistic writing known as the fourth book of the Maccabees puts into the mouth of the dying heroes of the Maccabean times the following prayer (vi. 29): "Make my blood a sacrifice of purification, and accept my soul in the place of theirs (the nation's)!" And in xvii. 22 we read: "By the blood of those saints and by the sin-offering of their death the Divine Providence has delivered Israel." This conception of vicarious sacrifice also dominated the popular notions concerning animal sacrifices among the Jews as well as among heathen peoples. On the one hand, they were regarded as a substitute for and a dramatic representation of an execution, and

in so far as they implied a vicarious satisfaction of the Divine Justice they ministered to the re-establishment of the broken bond of relationship between the community and the Divinity; on the other hand, as the most effective means of purification (for the body and blood of the sacred victim possessed powers peculiarly sacred) they served to remove the impurity which hinders communion with the Divinity.[1] Also among the Greeks propitiatory rites for the appeasement of the anger of offended gods and spirits are often found in conjunction with rites of purification which aim at the removal of dæmonic pollution; both purposes are served by the vicarious sacrifice of animals, and in special instances even of human beings, whose slaughter availed for the purification of the state.[2] In Athens, at the spring festival in the month Thargelion, two condemned criminals were every year led in solemn procession

[1] Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 2nd ed., pp. 319 *ff.*

[2] Rohde, *Psyche*, pp. 247 *f.*, 366 *f.*; Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, III. 125 *f.*, II. 39 *ff.*

through the city and afterwards stoned or burnt; in Abdera the same sacrifice was offered yearly, and in Marseilles on the occasion of any special public calamity. In the Ionian cities of Asia Minor an animal was generally substituted for a man, or the slaughter was only performed symbolically and replaced by blows with sacred twigs. This substitution of an animal for a man in the sin-offering is still plainly discernible in the legends of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, and of Iphigenia by Agamemnon. But this custom of substitution did not everywhere prevail among the heathen Semites. Even in the period of the Israelitish kingdom the Canaanites, as is well known, still sacrificed their first-born to Moloch in the fire; and the prophets up to the time of Jeremiah were obliged to wage a constant war with the tendency to similar heathen abominations even among the Israelites — a proof how deeply the conception of the necessity of human propitiatory sacrifices was rooted in

Semitic religion. And indeed the greater the worth and the rank of the life which was sacrificed, the more effectual was thought to be the offering. According to ancient custom, says Philo of Byblus,[1] in times of great danger the ruler of a city or a nation must deliver his beloved son to death on behalf of the whole nation as a vicarious sacrifice to the offended dæmons, and the children thus sacrificed were slain with mystic ceremonies. An example of such a sacrifice of a king's son is given in the story concerning the king of Moab in 2 Kings iii. 27. It is related of the Carthaginians that they believed that their defeat and siege by Agathocles (308 B.C.) were brought about by the wrath of Baal, because they had for a long time sacrificed to him children of slaves instead of children of noble family. They accordingly determined to propitiate their god by casting a hundred children of their noblest families into the fiery cavern of his brazen image, and this number was

[1] *Cf.* Eusebius, *Præpar. Evang.*, iv. 16 (156*d*).

increased by three hundred more who voluntarily offered themselves for sacrifice.[1] Even at the time of Tertullian[2] this horrible custom was secretly practised by the Carthaginians in spite of all the efforts of the Roman authorities to suppress it. The idea that the sacrifice of royal children had peculiar efficacy is connected with that ancient Eastern belief that the Divinity was incarnate in kings; it was thus a life divine, or at least allied to the Divine, which was in such cases offered to the Divinity. This brings us to the idea of the dying and reviving god which lies at the root of the mysteries.

In its original form this idea belongs to the most ancient elements of the religious legends and customs which arose from man's yearly experience of the withering of vegetation in autumn and its revival in spring. The child-like fancy of primitive man has everywhere regarded these natural phenomena as events in

[1] Diodorus, xx. 14.
[2] *Apology*, 6.

the fateful history of the gods and spirits which rule in nature. This belief has ever found expression in corresponding religious rites of sorrow and joy, rites which were not regarded as empty symbols, but were supposed to exert magical influence in preserving the divine life in nature from the destruction which threatened it every year and in helping forward its victorious resurrection. Relics of this primitive belief have been almost everywhere preserved in popular customs—in the driving forth of winter and death at the spring festivals with their May Queens, in the festivals of harvest with their Corn-mothers or "Maidens" personifications of the Corn-spirit, and so forth.[1] However among the peoples of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Greece these universal conceptions and customs have given rise to definite myths of the death and return of a god whose

[1] Details of these customs have been collected in rich abundance by Frazer in *The Golden Bough,* II. chap. iii. §§ 2 *ff.* The reader is also referred to this book as an authority for the following remarks upon the mysteries.

former history is realised and represented in the rites of the yearly festivals. And when in the later days of advancing civilisation man's anxiety for the preservation of the life of nature gave place to his need of a surety for the preservation of the individual life after death, then we find that those myths and ceremonies which were originally concerned only with the yearly death and revival of vegetation—that is, with the spirits and gods which rule therein—are now transformed into symbols and sacraments of the mysteries by which the pledge of the life to come is conveyed to the initiated.

Behind the Egyptian mysteries of Isis lies the myth of Osiris, who—originally a god of vegetation—was slain by his brother Set the demon of the withering heat of summer, and since then rules in the underworld as king and judge of the dead, and on earth lives again in his son Horus who avenged his death upon his adversary Set. This myth was celebrated by a religious drama during the autumn festival,

which lasted from the 17th to the 20th day of the month Athyr (November). The first day, the 17th the day of the death of Osiris, was celebrated with rites of mourning, but the third day, the 19th, was given up to joy, for on this day, the third after the death, Osiris' body was recovered by his sister and wife Isis.[1] Likewise at Byblus, in a spring festival, the death of Adonis was first celebrated by the mourning of women, and then on the next day his resurrection and translation to heaven were celebrated with shouts of joy.[2] According to another version of the legend we learn that Adonis, like Persephone, always spent one half of the year in the underworld and the other half in the upper world in renewed fellowship with his beloved Aphrodite (Astarte). In Phrygia, Attis, the lover of the "Great Mother" Cybele, plays the part of Adonis in Syria; his festival was held at the time of the

[1] Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris,* ed. Parthey, chaps. xiii., xxxix., and p. 235.

[2] Lucian, *De dea Syria,* p. 6.

Spring Equinox, and lasted four days. First the death of the god, the result of his self-mutilation, was celebrated with songs of lamentation, and was symbolically represented by the chief priest, who scratched his arm and offered the blood flowing from the wound as a sacrifice, and by others who mutilated themselves and so followed in the footsteps of the god.[1] Afterwards on the fourth day followed the "Feast of Joy," in celebration of the resurrection of the god, when the priest anointed the mouths of the mourners, speaking the while the formula—

> Be of good cheer, ye pious; as the god is saved,
> So will salvation come to us from all our trials.[2]

Essentially the same myth lies at the origin of the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone; only in this case it is not a husband or lover whose death the goddess bewails, but the daughter whom Pluto, lord of the underworld,

[1] Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, x. 1061–1075.

[2] Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profan. relig.*, chaps. iii., xxii.

has caught away from the flowery meadows[1] into his realm of the shades. The myth relates how she was sought for everywhere over land and sea by her mother, how the sorrow of the goddess checked all fruitful growth, how the threatened danger of universal death by famine moved Zeus to command her restoration to her mother on the condition that she spent one half of each year with her husband in the underworld and the other half with her mother in the world above.[2] The dramatic representation of this history of the two goddesses, especially of the mourning of Demeter and her recovery of her daughter, formed the subject of the Eleusinian mysteries. These mysteries, no doubt, had as their original aim the preservation and promotion of the life of nature by symbolic magic; but later under the influence of the Dionysio-Orphic religion they attained to a loftier significance,

[1] Thus Persephone, like her mother Ceres, is a personification of vegetation.

[2] Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profan. relig.*, chap. vii.; *Hyginus Fabulæ*, 146; Ovid, *Metamorp.*, v. 509–571.

and offered to the initiated the pledge of a blissful life after death. Also Dionysus, like Osiris,[1] with whom he is indeed identified by the Greeks, belongs to those nature divinities whose death and mutilation and following revival to life are narrated in different versions of the legends and are represented in the corresponding mystic ceremonies. In these rites the mutilation of the god was imitated in the sacrifice of a bull, which was torn in pieces by the teeth of the worshippers, who devoured the bleeding flesh. Thus they partook of the immortal life of the god, whose incarnation the bull was accounted to be—a mystic communion in which the life and death of the god were ever realised and appropriated afresh.[2]

Nearly allied to these legends of the violent death of a god are those which tell of the voluntary descent of a god or hero into the underworld and of his fortunate return there-

[1] Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, chap. xxxv.; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profan. relig.*, chap. vi.

[2] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.*, i. 12, 17 *f.*; *cf.* Rohde, *Psyche*, 301 *ff.* Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, II. 165.

from. The most ancient of these is the Babylonian myth of the descent of Istar[1]:—In order that she might restore her lover Tammuz to life again, the goddess descends into the "Land without Return," to fetch the water of life. When she has arrived at the gate of the underworld she imperiously demands admittance of the porter, otherwise she threatens to break down the doors of Hell and to restore to the world above the spirits imprisoned therein. Much against her will, the mistress of the underworld grants Istar admittance "according to the ancient laws," *i.e.* on the condition that, at each of the seven gates she must pass, one of her garments should be taken from her so that she might enter into the underworld quite naked, and that as soon as she arrived she should be closely imprisoned and afflicted with sixty diseases. As now the removal of the goddess of fertility threatened to put an end to all propagation of human and

[1] Schrader, *Höllenfahrt der Istar,* and by the same author, *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament,* 2nd edit., 561 *ff.*

animal life, and thus to bring about the extermination of the living creation (*cf.* the same thought in the Demeter-myth above, pp. 95*f.*), Ea, the chief of the gods, created the hero Assusunamir and sent him into the underworld to deliver Istar. At the command of this ambassador of the gods, the mistress of the underworld released the imprisoned goddess, ordered her to be sprinkled with the water of life, and directed that her garments should be returned to her at each of the seven gates through which she again passed on her upward journey. The poem then seems to conclude with the narrative how Tammuz, the lover of Istar, was washed in the water of life and anointed with oil, and by this means restored to life again; whereupon the death-lament gives place to the joyful tone of the pipes, accompanied by the loud rejoicing and merry-making of the worshippers. We have here evidently a description of a spring festival celebrated with the same rites as those sacred to Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and to Demeter and Persephone. A

descent-myth of the Mandæans, a Babylonian Jewish sect, shows the closest relationship with this Babylonian myth concerning Istar. Here the divine hero, Hibil-Ziwa, is called into existence that he may descend into the underworld to conquer the dragon of darkness, to shut up in prison the princes of Hades, and to deliver the spirits of the good and lead them up into the world of light.[1] What Istar only threatened to do is now really performed on behalf of the good spirits by Hibil-Ziwa the heroic ambassador of the gods—the gates of the underworld are broken, the dead are delivered from their prison. Thus this Mandæan myth forms the transition from heathen to Gnostic Christian conceptions of an allied character.

In the well-known hymn of the Naassene (Ophite) Gnostics[2] a description is first given of the manifold distress of the human soul; we are told how it wanders about in the laby-

[1] Brandt, *Die mandäische Religion*, pp. 213 *ff.*, 191.
[2] Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, v. 11.

rinth of the earthly life without finding any outlet of escape. Therefore, the hymn proceeds, Christ, the heavenly spirit of salvation, implored His Father:—"Send me! In possession of the seals, let me descend, let me wander through all the æons and disclose all secrets, let me make known the forms of the gods and impart the hidden mystery of the holy way called Gnosis." The Gnostic scheme of salvation is therefore as follows:—The heavenly Christ-Spirit descends through all space to deliver the souls imprisoned by the Satanic powers of earth and of Hades. He effects this deliverance by imparting a secret knowledge of these powers, which gives the soul authority over them; just as, according to the Wisdom of the Egyptians, the souls in the life to come must protect themselves from the malicious assaults of the demon powers by their mastery of mystic names and formulæ. From the circles of syncretistic Gnosticism this myth of the "Descent" passed also into Catholic Christianity. It is often found in the

apocryphal Gospels and Acts which were much read in the first centuries ; for instance, in the Gospel of Peter the risen Christ is asked by a voice from Heaven : "Hast Thou preached obedience to those that sleep?" Whereupon was heard the answer "Yes!" The meaning is that Christ during the time between His death and resurrection had descended into Hell, and had revealed Himself to the world of spirits as their victorious lord and master. How important this conception was to the early Christians, and with what joyful pride they gloried in the superiority of Christianity to the allied mysteries in this very point, may be seen from the eloquent words of the ancient Christian champion and apologist Firmicus Maternus[1] :— Whilst in the case of the heathen deities only their death is known, but their resurrection was neither prophesied beforehand nor testified by eye-witnesses, the Son of God has, on the contrary, performed what He had before promised—"He has closed the gates of the

[1] *De errore profanarum religionum*, chaps. xxiiiB. and xxiv.

realm of Hell and has broken the yoke of the hard law of Death; in three days[1] has he gathered together the flock of the righteous, so that death shall no longer hold over them baneful sway; that their merit may not result in endless hopelessness He has broken up the eternal prison-house, its iron doors are fallen at the bidding of Christ: see—how the earth trembled—its very foundations quaked at the presence of the Godhead of Christ; the sun sank in night before finishing its daily course, and darkness veiled the round world. All the elements were in tumult as Christ waged war

[1] The "*triduum*" does not agree exactly with the Gospel history, since between Good Friday afternoon and the early morning of Easter Sunday come not 3×24 hours, but about 40. The expression *triduum* is probably chosen from reference to the Attis-Cybele festival, where on the fourth day—thus after three days—the joyful festival of the resurrection of the god succeeded to the mournful celebration of his death. On the other hand, the Gospel period agrees with that of the Osiris-Isis festival, where the festival of joy on Athyr 19th followed upon the day of mourning on Athyr 17th. Note in conclusion that the New Testament Resurrection legend varies between "on the third day" and "after three days," a most noteworthy parallel.

against the tyranny of Death; three long days was the battle fought, until Death's evil forces were overcome and routed. See—how after three days breaks a brighter day than has ever been; with beams of heightened splendour the sun pays homage to Christ the Almighty God; the Godhead triumphs bringing salvation; the host of the righteous and of the saints escorts His chariot of victory. Mortality cries exultingly: 'O Death! where is thy sting?' The advancing Saviour commands the opening of the doors of Heaven: 'Open ye! Open ye! break, ye everlasting bars! Christ the God hath crushed death beneath His feet and calls mankind, His elect, to Heaven again.' At once the heavenly watchmen recognise the Son of God; they see the booty won from the conquered foe, and they remember the ordinance of old; they mingle their voices with those ascending to Heaven and cry: 'Lift up the gates, ye watchmen, that the King of Glory may come in! The Son has come home; the Father returns to Him the sceptre of the

kingdom, and grants Him a throne of equal might, that He may reign and rule in the eternal majesty of His Godhead.' "

Also in Græco-Roman legend we find tales of many kinds concerning descents into Hell and ascents into Heaven. There is, first, the old Homeric descent of Odysseus and its development in accordance with growing definiteness of conception concerning the life beyond the grave. This was soon followed by epic narratives concerning similar descents of other heroes,[1] such as Theseus, Pirithous, Orpheus, Heracles, Æneas, and Pythagoras. Primitive legend, poetic fancy, and religious speculation have all alike contributed their share to the development of these tales. The best known is the descent of the mythical bard Orpheus, the prophet, the wondrous physician, the sanctifying priest of legend, from whom the Orphic sect professed to derive their esoteric doctrine and secret rites which served to deliver the soul from its

[1] Rohde, *Psyche*, pp. 278 *ff.*

corporeal prison and to raise it to immortal life by imparting the knowledge of its higher origin, by mystic initiation, and by ascetic practice. In the writings ascribed to Orpheus are found detailed descriptions of the next world, its punishments and rewards, as they were supposed to have been seen by the hero on the occasion of his descent. The Greek legends of descents into Hades are indeed only concerned with the attainment of a knowledge concerning the things of the next world which might, under certain conditions, serve to insure and secure the future life, they do not tell of a direct conquest of the powers of death. We can nevertheless trace the beginning of the latter conception in the legend concerning Heracles' victory over the dog Cerberus the guardian of Hades.

Ascension myths are found in manifold shapes. Some narrate a definite assumption of a hero, either divine himself or a favourite of the gods, into the realm of the blessed; others tell of a temporary ascension of a soul in a state of

ecstasy, in which it attains to the vision of the stages and dangers of the way to Heaven—visions which served as patterns for eschatological narratives concerning the heavenly voyage of pious souls after death. Hebrew legend knows of only two assumptions: that of Enoch, who "was taken up from earth" and "translated to God" or "departed," and that of Elijah, who ascended to Heaven in a chariot of fire.[1] In Greek legend however such assumptions are of very frequent occurrence, and take the differing form of a translation either to the Elysian fields, or to the isles of the blessed, or to a cave, or to the top of a mountain, or to the depths of the sea, or lastly to the ideal mount of Olympus the heaven of the gods.[2] According to the original significance of these legends the whole man, both body and soul, was directly translated into the other world of bliss, without

[1] Genesis v. 24; Ecclesiasticus xliv. 16, xlix. 14; Josephus, *Antiq.*, I. iii. 4; 2 Kings ii. 11.

[2] Further details will be found collected in Rohde's *Psyche*, pp. 63 *ff.*, 658 *ff.*

passing through the gate of death; but the enlightened minds of later days could not rest satisfied with the conception of a bodily ascension, as related for instance in the old legends of Heracles and Romulus, and therefore confined the ascension to the disembodied soul. The legend of Heracles [1] is moreover in many points of special and typical interest. He is the son of Zeus and a human mother Alcmene; throughout his life he must battle with a hostile fate to which he was condemned by the wrath of Hera; he proves his divine power in hard labours and conflicts, which for the most part have as their aim the conquest of hostile powers in this world and the next (Cerberus); in particular he delivers Prometheus, the representative of humanity under the curse of the gods, from the divine penalty, from the chain and the vulture which daily lacerated him; at last he voluntarily ascends the funeral pyre, and thence he is raised im-

[1] Hyginus, *Fabulæ*, pp. 29 *ff.*; Diodorus Sic., *Hist.*, iv. 8–39.

mediately to heaven to the side of Zeus; he drinks of the divine nectar, and thus becomes partaker of immortal life. The legend could imagine no other fitting end for a life sprung from divine seed and approved in conflict for the welfare of humanity. Yet it is not only of mythical heroes of old that this tale of an ascent into Heaven is told; the same legendary honour is conferred upon great men of history, for they too are regarded as of divine descent. "Since divine honours were paid to the kings and queens of the Macedonian kingdoms of the East beginning even with Alexander the Great, men even dared to assert that the divine ruler at the end of his earthly existence is not dead, but has been caught up by the Deity and still lives."[1] Suetonius (*Julius*, 88) relates of Cæsar that after his death he was raised to the rank of a god, not simply by official decree, but also by popular conviction; for during the games which

[1] Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 663.

Augustus founded in his honour there blazed for seven days in the heavens a comet which was held to be the soul of Cæsar translated into Heaven. Likewise it was believed of the Emperor Augustus that he had soared into Heaven from the funeral pyre that consumed his remains; a prætor indeed is reported to have sworn that be saw the image (the soul) of the emperor fly up to Heaven (in later days it was customary at the funeral of an emperor to release from the pyre an eagle, which was supposed to bear his soul to Heaven). This legend was not merely an expression of courtly flattery, but corresponded to the superstitious belief of the times, as is clear from the fact that the same tale is told and believed of other remarkable men. Immediately after Peregrinus Proteus had cast himself into the flames at Olympia, in order that in death also he might be like his exemplar Heracles, a trustworthy old man testified that he had seen an eagle fly up to Heaven out of the flames, and that the

glorified Peregrinus had appeared to him clothed in a white garment and with a garland of victory on his head. Soon afterwards he was worshipped as a god in the city of his birth,[1] miracles of healing were wrought at his temple, and people resorted thither to obtain oracles. Likewise, in connection with the end of the miracle-monger Apollonius of Tyana, manifold tales are related of his mysterious disappearance in the temple of Athene at Lindus, or in that of Dictynna in Crete; and his biographer Philostratus sees a proof of his apotheosis in the fact that nowhere on earth can a grave of Apollonius be found.

I must omit the discussion of the conceptions of the heavenly voyage of a soul in the state of ecstasy, and of the similar conceptions regarding departed souls in general, as they are found in Jewish and Orphic apocalypses, and in Gnostic, Mandæan, and Mithraic

[1] According to Lucian's narrative, which is also corroborated by Athenagoras' *Apology for the Christians*, chap. xxiii.

liturgies.[1] Such a discussion is too far removed from my present theme; it belongs rather to the sphere of comparative eschatology and would prove a very fertile field of inquiry. On the other hand, the primitive faith in Christ as the prince and giver of life is intimately connected with the conception that His life is imparted to His followers through faith in His name, by baptism into his name, and by partaking of His flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper. Many parallels to these three points are found in the history of religion in the East and West.

In that very instructive work by W. Heitmüller, entitled *Im Namen Jesu* (*Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament speziel zur altchristlichen Taufe*, 1903), a great mass of material is collected to illustrate the theory and practice of "faith in the name" in Biblical and

[1] *Cf.* Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, IV. vols. ii. and iii; Dieterich, *Eine Mithras-Liturgie*, pp. 179 *ff.*

profane religions. I must here content myself with a few striking extracts from this book which bear upon my subject. In primitive religion the name is not simply a word or image, but it has a very real value; it stands in the closest mystic relationship with the nature and fortune of its bearer, indeed it is regarded as in a certain sense an independent hypostasis of his essence and living energy. A change of name implies a renewal of the personality, its deliverance from the fate which clings to the old name. A curse denounced against the name of a man brings misfortune to the man himself. He who knows and pronounces the name of a god or demon has power over the being itself which is named, and can use this power for his own ends, for good or evil, for offence or defence; hence the employment of sacred or mystic names in every description of sorcery. On the other hand calling upon the name of a deity brings the deity itself near to the petitioner, and binds them together with a mystic bond, whereby

the man is protected as by a charm against all power of harm; one "who is blessed in the name of Jahweh," upon whom rests the protecting power of this God, he stands under His safe guard. Assusunamir, the ambassador of the gods, adjures the queen of the underworld by the "names of the great gods," and wrests from her the deliverance of Istar. By the power of the signet ring inscribed with the sacred name of darkness Hibil-Ziwa forces a passage through the gates of the underworld. By knowing and pronouncing the names of the spirits which guard the gates of Heaven the soul enforces admittance on its journey to Heaven.[1] The king's son, in the Hymn of the Soul in the Acts of Thomas,[2] by the name of his father and his mother charms and pacifies the serpent, gains possession of the pearl which it guards, and so can now return from exile (the life of earth) to his heavenly

[1] *Cf.* Origen's description of the Orphic Gnosis (*Con. Cels.*, vi. 30 *ff.*), and Hippolytus' description of the Gnosis of the Naassenes (*Philosoph*, v. 11; *cf.* above, pp. 100 *f.*).

[2] Lipsius, *Apocryphe Apostelgeschichten*, I. 293.

home. By imparting the knowledge of mystic names the pledge of future bliss was afforded to those initiated in the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries. In the Phrygian mysteries the priests bore the name of the god Attis, in order to identify themselves with him. So also we read in the *Leidener Zauber-Papyrus*, II.[1]: "Thou art I and I am thou; whatever I say must come to pass, for I bear thy name as an amulet in my heart; all the storms of Styx will not overwhelm me; nothing, whether spirit or demon or any other horror of Hades, will oppose me because of thy name which I have in my soul, which I invoke; hear me then, O merciful one, in all things; grant me health proof against all bewitchment; grant me happiness, prosperity, honour, victory, power, lovableness; hold in check the evil eye of all my adversaries; grant me grace in all my works." Though this prayer comes from an incantation-papyrus, it can undoubtedly serve as a classical expression of primitive

[1] Dieterich, *Abraxas*, p. 196; Heitmüller, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

name-superstition, its mysticism and its magic. "To believe in a sacred (divine) name" is thus the same as to bear it in the heart, and in consequence to be filled with the supernatural forces which are possessed by the owner of the name; "to call upon the name" is no mere speaking of words, but establishes a vital connection with this supernatural energy, so that it wonderfully manifests itself in the world of experience and action. If we transfer these conceptions to the sphere of Christianity, then "faith in the name of Jesus Christ" and "calling upon His name" also signify a mystic connection with the very nature of the Son of God, the Conqueror of Satan and Death, the Saviour and Lord of the Universe, and therewith an appropriation of all the energies of life which are His and proceed from Him. In Christianity the mystical and magical characteristics of the old name-superstition are by no means cast off, they serve rather as the receptacle of loftier spiritual experiences of real moral

and religious worth, they are morally ennobled.

The same is true also of Baptism into the name of Jesus, only in this case the magical power of the spoken name is reinforced by the sacramental purifying and invigorating power of water, which by the invocation of the sacred name is charged, like an electric accumulator, with supernatural energy. The idea which is here in the background is connected with the most elementary conceptions and customs of the faith and ritual of every nation. We find it expressed in its earliest form in the Descent-myth of Istar. She descended to fetch "the Water of Life" for the revival of Tammuz; in the underworld she is smitten with sixty diseases; then at the command of the Queen of Hades she is sprinkled by the nymphs of the underworld with the Water of Life, and is able to return safe and sound to the land of the living; then Tammuz is washed with the life-giving water and restored to life. This last episode of the myth was presented in

dramatic show during the summer festival of the month Tammuz (June or July), when the mourning women poured water over the image of Tammuz. Likewise at the festival of Adonis either plants or an image in human shape, both representing the god, were cast into water, in order to effect by this act of magic symbolism the restoration to life of the god of fertility. In the processions of the festival of Osiris a vessel of water was always carried in front in honour of the god,[1] indeed in Egypt water was regarded as an effluence from Osiris, and therefore a divine substance. These customs of purification, met with everywhere, rest upon the presupposition that it is the divine power dwelling in water which serves to expel demons and their baleful poison. For instance among the Persians a man who is defiled by touching a dead body is sprinkled with water in order to expel the devil from him; and the

[1] Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, chap. xxxvi. Further examples from popular customs are collected in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, II. 120–126.

devil is supposed to retreat from each member of the body as soon as it is touched by the water, and at last to make his escape by the toes of the left foot.[1] Again, among the Greeks and Romans all who took part in a funeral were accustomed afterwards to purify themselves in consecrated water from the defilement they had contracted. But since from the primitive standpoint of animism not only disease and death but also sin and guilt were regarded as due to dæmonic defilement, so it was believed that sprinkling with pure spring water could also cleanse a man from sin and guilt.[2] Ovid (*Fasti*, ii. 45) has satirised this easy method of religious purification and cancelling of guilt in the well-known verse—

> Ah, nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cædis
> Fluminea tolli posse putetis aqua!

He is not however correct in his opinion that the custom was derived from Greece alone, for it was equally common in all parts of the world.

[1] Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Religionsgeschichte*, 2nd edit., II. 191.

[2] Rohde, *Psyche*, pp. 361 *ff.*

Even in the third and fourth centuries we find, in books of magic, prescriptions for purification which recommend water drawn from three or seven springs as an effectual charm against every ill of body or soul (in the case of purification from the crime of murder water must be drawn from fourteen springs). But this divine power of water, which drives out demons and counteracts their baleful infection, exerts also an influence for good of a positive kind. It is an instrument by which the soul may be imbued with high spiritual powers, and brought into the condition of prophetic inspiration and ecstasy. Thus the Pythia, the priestess of Apollo of Delphi, by drinking of the Castalian spring was filled with the power of the god (ἔνθεος) and inspired to give oracles. In the ceremonies of the different mysteries, the sacred ablutions served not only as a means of purification, but also of imparting renewed life; by their instrumentality men gained a share in the immortal life of the deity, and attained to a new birth. According to Ter-

tullian,[1] baptism in water formed part of the initiation ceremonies of the mysteries of Eleusis, of Isis, and of Mithras, in order to wash away sin and as a symbol of the resurrection. In the case of the mysteries of Isis this testimony is corroborated by the description in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (xi. 21, 23):—The initiation ceremony consisted in a symbolic pilgrimage to the land of death and a return to the light a "new birth to the path of a new salvation," and so the day of initiation was called "the sacred birthday." The initiated in the mysteries of Mithras were called "new born for eternity"; in a Mithras liturgy lately published[2] the initiated worshipper prays:—"If it hath pleased you (the gods) to grant me the birth to immortality, that I, after the present distress which sorely afflicts me, may gaze upon the immortal First Cause with the immortal spirit and the immortal

[1] *De Baptismo,* chap. v., and *De Præscriptione Hær.*, chap. 40. In the mysteries of Mithras an "*imago resurrectionis*" is displayed.

[2] Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 5, 13, 15, 166.

water, that I through the spirit may be born again, and that in me purified by sacred rite and delivered from guilt the Holy Spirit may live and move. . . . . Since this mere man born from a mortal womb is this day newly begotten by thee, since by the counsel of God, marvellous in goodness, he, but one of many thousands, has been called to immortality, he aspires, he yearns to adore thee with all the faculties that he but a man possesses. . . . . Hail to thee, Lord of Water, Founder of the Earth, Ruler of the Spirit! Born again I expire, in that I am being exalted and as I am exalted I die; born with the birth which begets life I am delivered to death and go the way, as thou hast instituted, as thou hast ordained and constituted the Sacrament." We have here, as the editor of this liturgy justly remarks, the clearest and most comprehensive instance of the employment of the symbol of death and new birth that we possess in an ancient liturgic text; it has its nearest analogy in the Pauline description of Baptism

as a symbolic communion with the Death and Resurrection of Christ (Rom. vi.). No wonder that this close relationship seemed so astonishing to Tertullian and the other ancient apologists that they could only explain it by imagining a diabolical aping of Christian rites. But that the true explanation is to be found in the common principles of animism is most clearly betrayed by Tertullian's own argument, when he derives the saving power of Baptism from the supernatural energy indwelling in water since the Creation when the Spirit of God brooded over the waters, an energy which is restored and heightened by the invocation of the name of Christ: "With the increase of the grace of God water also acquired more power; that which once healed ills of the body now restores the soul; that which worked temporal good now renews to eternal life."[1] Baptism is thus the ethical fulfilment of the

[1] Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, chap. v. *Cf.* the same thoughts in the *Clementine Homilies*, xi. 22 *ff.*, and among the Elkesaite Gnostics, *Epiph. Hær.*, p. 53.

old lustration ceremonies. Moreover we have in the New Testament a clear proof of the powerful influence which magical ideas still exercised even upon the primitive Christian conception of Baptism. For St Paul (1 Cor. xv. 29) mentions without blame the custom of the Corinthian Christians to be baptised for the good of departed friends, a practice which has a close parallel in the Orphic supplication for the souls of sinful forefathers, and in the "deliverance and purification of living and dead" by the Dionysic initiation, which is promised by the Orphic priests.[1]

The relationship which exists between Baptism and the ancient lustration ceremonies may also be shown to exist between the Christian Supper of the Lord and the ancient sacrificial feasts, whose fundamental idea is that the eating of sacred food places a man in mystic communion with the life of the deity.[2] We can also trace this

[1] Plato, *Rep.*, ii. 364; Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 420 *f.*

[2] *Cf.* Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2nd edit., pp. 239 *ff.*

conception back to the primitive mythology of Babylon.[1] Adapa, the son of Ea, though endowed by his father with extraordinary wisdom, did not receive from him the gift of eternal life. He might however have obtained even this gift, and so have become fully like unto the gods, if he had accepted the "Food of Life" and the "Water of Life" offered to him by Anu, the god of heaven; but in obedience to the counsel of Ea (who may have been either mistrustful of Anu or jealous of Adapa) he refused to partake of this divine food, and so forever forfeited immortal life (just as Adam and Eve forfeited the same gift because at the instigation of the serpent they meddled with the tree of knowledge, and therefore were cast out of Paradise). The possession of immortal life depends therefore upon tasting the heavenly food of life, which belongs to the gods and is under certain conditions imparted by them to their favourites. By tasting nectar

[1] Schrader-Zimmern, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, pp. 520 *ff.*

and ambrosia, the food of the gods, Heracles was received into the fellowship of the immortals of Olympus, just as on the other hand Persephone through tasting the fruit of the underworld abides there imprisoned. The eating of consecrated food, which is not simply the symbol but also in mysterious fashion the shrine of the life of the deity, has always formed part of the ritual of every nation. Upon this rests the sacramental significance of the sacrificial feast; it effects a sacred communion with the life of the deity, which is contained in the flesh and blood of the victim (itself an incarnation of the primitive nature-deity), and is thus appropriated by those who partake of them. Thus in the cult of Dionysus a bull, which is regarded as an incarnation of the god of fertility, is torn with the teeth and its flesh eaten raw,[1] that by means of this repetition of the sacrifice of the god himself his divine life may be transferred to those who partake in the ceremony. Often in place of

[1] *Cf.* the quotations above, p. 97, note 2.

the real flesh a substitute in the form of a loaf baked in the shape of the victim was eaten sacramentally.[1] Such substitutes of various forms for what was originally the flesh of the victim seem to have been usual in the later mysteries. For instance in the mysteries of Attis he that was to be initiated declared, before his admission into the innermost sanctuary, that he had eaten from the drum and drunk from the cymbal, and thus had become consecrated to Attis. We do not know what kind of food and drink the postulant for initiation partook from the ritual instruments of the priest of Cybele, but we may certainly conclude, from the words which our authority Firmicus Maternus adds to his description,[2] that we have represented here a sacramental eating and drinking. "Wretched one!" he cries, "thou hast eaten poison and drunk of the cup of death! Meat of another kind it is

[1] Many illustrative details from popular customs of ancient and modern times are collected in Frazer, *The Golden Bough,* ii. 260–300.

[2] *De errore prof. relig.,* chap. xviii.

that confers life and salvation, that restores the fainting, that calls back the wanderers, that raises the fallen, that grants to the dying the sign of endless immortality; seek the bread and cup of Christ, that you may fill your human nature with substance that is immortal!" The comparison here is noteworthy in a twofold aspect: in the first place it shows that in both cases the fundamental idea is the same—the sacramental eating and drinking is a "medicine of immortality and an antidote of death," words in which Ignatius (*Eph.*, xx. 2) formulates the Catholic view concerning the Lord's Supper, a view which has also found drastic expression in St John vi. 51–59; but in the second place it shows that the Christian Sacrament works as a moral remedy for the wandering and fallen—though the background of magic remains the same, it is moralised in a Christian sense. The same moral transformation is brought about in the Gospel of St John by addition of verse 63 to the description of the theory

of the Sacrament which has gone before. To the mysteries of Mithras also, besides the holy ablutions and the signing of the forehead with a covenant sign,[1] there belonged a sacred banquet of which only the initiated of the higher degrees might partake. This was regarded as an imitation of the meal by which Mithras himself, according to the legend, had sealed his covenant with the sun-god Helios. In a relief which has come down to us,[2] we see the two gods sitting side by side on cushions, each with a cup in his right hand, while before them is set a small dish containing four small loaves, each marked with crossed lines. On either side stand the initiated wearing masks which represent the

[1] It is uncertain whether the sign was made by branding or by anointing with oil. *Cf.* Rev. xiii. 16 *f.*, xiv. 9: "the sign of the beast upon the forehead or the hand"; can there be here a reference to the sign of Mithras? And could not also the expression in xiv. 10, "the wine of the wrath of God which is mingled unmixed," be suggested by the cup of Mithras?

[2] Cumont, *Textes et monuments relat. aux mystères de Mithra*, I. 157 *f.*

nature of Mithras under different attributes; they have thus "put on" the god in order to place themselves in mystic communion with him (*cf.* Gal. iv. 37, "ye have put on Christ"). Justin (*Apol.* I. 66) relates of the banquet of Mithras that "Bread and a cup full of water were brought forward with some words of blessing"; and Tertullian[1] speaks of an offering of bread and a symbol of the resurrection. Both apologists regarded this rite as a diabolical aping of the Christian Sacrament; and in forming this opinion of theirs they partly ignored the unquestionable priority of the heathen to the Christian Sacrament in point of time, and partly explained it by assuming a prophetic anticipation on the part of the demons. A noteworthy point of coincidence is found in the fact that in both cases the same uncertainty exists concerning the content of the cup, whether it contained

[1] *De Præscr. Hær,* chap. 40: Mithras signat in frontibus milites suos, celebrat et panis oblationem et imaginem resurrectionis inducit.

only water or also wine, for the original cup of the Christian Sacrament did not always at all events contain wine, for in the primitive Christian love-feasts of the Acts of the Apostles no mention is ever made of wine.[1] In the Corinthian community however according to 1 Cor. xi. 21, celebration with wine had become the custom, and had afforded the Apostle Paul (who besides speaks never of "the wine," but only of "the cup") a welcome occasion for the mystical explanation of the Lord's Supper as a communion not only with the body but also with the blood of Christ (1 Cor. x. 16). Though there is no parallel in the banquet of Mithras to this blood-symbolism of the Christian Sacrament, one is certainly found in the blood-baptism of the Taurobolians and the Criobolians which belongs to the mysteries of Cybele, and perhaps also of Mithras. These sacrifices of

[1] See on this point Harnack, "Brot und Wasser, die eucharistischen Elemente bei Justin" in *Texten und Untersuchungen*, VII., 1892.

bulls and rams, when adopted into the cult of Mithras, were evidently regarded as a sacramental imitation of the sacrifice of the bull which Mithras himself once offered for the salvation of the world—a sacrifice which is represented in all pictorial monuments of the cult of Mithras, wherein the bull may be conceived as an incarnation of the god himself, as is the case at all events in the cult of Dionysus. As now the postulant for initiation was sprinkled with the blood of the slain bull or ram,[1] this blood-baptism served him as a sacramental means of communion with the death and life of the god; and the thought of purification and new birth by means of the sacramental death-symbol, which according to the liturgy quoted above was a fundamental conception in the religion of Mithras, came in this blood-baptism to very drastic expression. In this connection we may call to mind the Christian doctrine concerning cleansing and

[1] Prudentius, *Peristephanon,* x. verses 1008–1050.

purification "by the blood of the Lamb"[1] (Rev. vii. 14).

[1] In τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον, an expression peculiar to the Johannine Apocalypse, there seems to exist a connection, by no means remote, with the Phrygian sacrifice of the ram.

V

CHRIST AS THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

THIS apocalyptic name of Christ (Rev. xix. 16) denotes the dignity and might which is ascribed to Him by the faith of the Church. It connotes:—(1) lordship over the community of the faithful, whose "Head" Christ is, as the Saviour who has established and guarantees their salvation, as the Lawgiver whose will is the rule of their life, and as the Judge who one day will reward everyone according to his works; (2) lordship over the universe, in that He is the mediator of its creation, its government, its final perfection.

With these conceptions and titles of dignity and lordship let us compare the following

parallels from different religious spheres. The faith of the Buddhists in the greatness of their founder is expressed in the most extravagant terms.[1] He is called the joy of the whole universe, the helper of the helpless, a mine of grace, the god of gods, the Brahman of the Brahmans, the unique saviour, the truly compassionate, the royal preacher, the bestower of the ambrosia of righteousness, the father, helper, friend, treasure, jewel of the universe; stronger than the strongest, more merciful than the most merciful, fairer than the fairest, more meritorious than the most meritorious, mightier than the mightiest; he it is who grants to every creature, though it only invokes his name or gives a handful of rice as alms in his name, the power to attain to salvation; eye cannot see, nor ear hear, nor mind conceive anything more glorious and more worthy of worship than Buddha. Again we quote some hymns from the chapter of "Thanksgivings" in *Lalita*

[1] Collected in Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 360.

Vistara (chap. xxiii.):—"In the world of created things, which through long ages was plagued by the ills of natural corruption, thou hast appeared, O king of physicians, who deliverest us from all ills! At thy coming, O leader! unrest vanishes, and both men and gods are filled with contentment. Thou, with thy gentle, kindly heart, art the guardian, the strong foundation, the head, the leader of the universe; thou art the best of physicians, who bringest the perfect medicine, sure healing for pain. High above all in thy charity and compassion thou orderest the things of the universe; high above all in thy austerity of life and good works, self-sufficient, perfect in purity, thou hast attained to perfection; and having thyself reached salvation, thou, as the herald of the four truths, wilt also save the rest of creation. The power of evil has been subdued by wisdom, courage, and gentleness; thou hast attained this, the highest, the immortal dignity, we greet thee as the conqueror of the host of the deceiver [*cf.* St

John viii. 44]. Thou, whose word is without fault, who, free from error and passion, hast trodden the path of eternal life, thou art worthy of honour and worship incomparable in heaven and upon earth. Thou revivest gods and men with thy words so clear and simple; by the beams which stream from thee thou art the conqueror of this universe, the lord of gods and men. Thou hast appeared, Light of the Law, Disperser of misery and ignorance, overflowing with humility and majesty; sun, moon, and fire shine no more in thy presence before the abundance of thy imperishable glory. Thou who teachest the knowledge of what is true and what is false, thou guide of the soul with voice most sweet, thou whose spirit is at rest, whose senses are mastered, whose heart is in perfect peace, thou who teachest what should be taught, thou that instructest the assembly of gods and men—I greet thee, Sakyamuni, as the greatest of men, as the miracle of the three thousand worlds, to whom honour and worship is due in heaven and on earth from gods and

from men." Finally we quote the prayer of a pious Buddhist[1] who, in the eleventh century A.D., was compelled because of his religion to flee from his fatherland:—"Whether I live in heaven or in hell, in the city of spirits or of men, let my mind be ever set steadfastly upon thee, for there is for me no other joy. Thou art my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; thou art my true friend in danger, O my beloved! thou art my lord, my teacher which impartest to me wisdom sweet as nectar. Thou art my riches, my joy, my delight, my greatness, my pride, my knowledge, and my life; thou art my all, O omniscient Buddha!" Where the pious soul rises in prayer so fervent to the object of its faith—by whatsoever name it may be called—the understanding scarcely dares to ask the prosaic question, whether after all Buddha, since he has entered into Nirvana, really exists, and

[1] From *The Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Feb. 1890, p. 127. I am indebted to Professor Carpenter, of Oxford, for this quotation.

whether he is really omnipresent and omniscient, so as to be able to hear the prayers of his devotees? With the Buddhists, of course, the historical founder of their communion is only the temporal and transitory form in which was manifested the eternal spirit of wisdom and goodness, which came not once only, but will ever return anew in visible manhood to forward the work of salvation among men who are ever in need of such assistance. It is therefore this eternal spirit of salvation which is really the object of the Buddhist faith; but the historic founder of the community, as the most lofty manifestation of this spirit that has hitherto appeared, is the form which first presents itself, under which the eye of adoring faith may conceive the invisible spirit. But as, according to Buddhist hope and belief, individual life in general, and in consequence the life of its founder, reaches its final goal in "Nirvana," which signifies either complete annihilation or a rest and bliss that is absolutely passive, so in Buddhist thought the

historic founder cannot be conceived, with the dogmatic distinctness of Christianity, as the exalted lord who in divine omnipotence ever rules his people. Nevertheless Buddha also is, so far as the practical devotion of his followers is concerned, the omnipresent and abiding object of their trustful love; a fact which shows quite clearly that in this case, as always, it is only the believing soul's need of a human manifestation of the Eternal which has naturally led to some kind of apotheosis of the historical Saviour. It is just as natural for faith to unify the limited human personality with the eternal spiritual principle, as it is for the understanding never to cease from drawing a clear and sharp line of division between the two. The resultant of these two tendencies, like the diagonal in the parallelogram of forces, is that wondrous form—the God-man of dogma.

Also from the mythology of polytheistic religions we may adduce many analogies to the kingship of Christ. Marduk, the god of

Babylon, the first-born son of Ea, is called "Lord of Lords and King of Kings" because he completed the conquest of Chaos and the creation of the world, and because he determines the lot of earthly kings. The latter function is also assigned to Nabu, who carries and writes the heavenly tablets of fate, and is called likewise king and lord of the gods of heaven and earth.[1] This god was no doubt originally identical with Marduk, from whom in later times he was differentiated as the heavenly scribe, the patron of wisdom and oracle, the Hermes and Thot of Babylon. In Egypt after the foundation of the new empire of Thebes, Ammon-Ra, the god of that city, was worshipped as the mysterious creator, "The lord of the thrones of the universe and the king of the gods," who unites in himself all the properties and powers of the other deities. In the realm of the dead however the judge is Osiris, and at his side Thot acts

[1] Schrader-Zimmern, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, pp. 374 and 402.

as the divine scribe, who, as the god of the word of magic power, shared in the creation of the world and became the patron of wisdom, oracle, and magic; he is in fact a kind of personification of the divine word of revelation or Logos. In the Persian religion[1] Ahura-Mazda is the wise lord, the creator, the upholder and guardian of the universe; at his side as personifications of his two chief characteristics, wisdom and righteousness, stand the genii—Vohu-mano, the "good thought" (Logos), the first-created of the good spirits, the mediator of creation and of the revelation of the law, and the guardian of the gate of heaven; and Asha-vahista, the genius of righteousness, the guardian and minister of the order and government of the universe, the judge in the final judgment; then Sraosha, the pure and victorious hero, the conqueror of demons, the conductor and

[1] Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Religionsgeschichte*, II. 173 *ff.*; Cumont, *Textes et monuments relat. aux mystères de Mithra*, I. 240 *ff.*; Böcklein, *Verwandtschaft der judisch-christlichen mit der parsischen Eschatologie*, p. 48 *ff.*

judge of souls, who also plays a chief part in the last decisive conflict at the end of the world; and last of all, Mithras, the friendly god of light and of truth, the champion against demons and the guardian of the pious, the judge of souls in the next world, of whom it is said in an ancient hymn that Ahura-Mazda created him of like greatness and dignity with himself (*i.e.* his cult occupied a position in the Persian religion rivalling that of the highest god). As a "mediator" in close connection with mankind, Mithras was half-identified with the sun-god in that religion which sprang from the intermingling of Persian, Babylonian, and Phrygian elements, and in the mysteries he was worshipped as the special saviour of the initiated. Even in the creation of the world legend assigns him a mediating part, for by means of his cosmogonic sacrifice of a bull he brought into being the germ of life in the vegetable and animal world. Then he is also the continual mediator of all salvation for his

worshippers in this world and the next; he is their example and support in the conflict with all Satanic powers; he is the leader and guardian of faithful souls on their perilous journey to heaven above. At the end of all things he will effect the renewal of the world by repeating his cosmogonic sacrifice; he will raise all the dead and prepare the cup of immortality for the righteous. In the ritual of Mithras Sunday was celebrated as the day sacred to the sun-god, and the great festival of the year was the celebration of the victory of the returning sun at the winter solstice. December 25th was the birthday of Sol Invictus long before it became the birthday of the Christian Saviour. How deeply the worshipper of Mithras conceived and felt his close relationship to his god may be seen from the liturgy quoted above,[1] from which we may further quote the following hymns:—"Hail, to thee, lord, mighty omnipotent king, greatest of the gods, Helios, lord of heaven and earth,

[1] Dieterich, *Eine Mythraliturgie*, pp. 11, 15.

god of gods; full of might is thy breath, full of might is thy power; lord, if it please thee, mention me before the most high god who has created and made thee!" Next, one raised into the presence of Mithras cries:—"Lord of my spirit, dwell with me in my soul, leave me not! Hail, lord, ruler of water, founder of the earth, master of the spirit! Lord, born again I expire," etc. (see above, p. 122).

But while to the gods of the mysteries, such as Mithras and Serapis, their worshippers ascribed unlimited authority over nature and the world of spirits—for of course without this power they would not be equipped for the defence of their devotees—it was only in the government of the individual fortune of the initiated in this world and the world to come that a practical exhibition of this authority was expected. The socio-ethical ideal of a renewal and conquest of earthly humanity by the victorious might of the heavenly Lord was wanting in the mysteries. This ideal was peculiar to Jewish Messianic belief, and at first,

at all events, was confined within the limits of Jewish hope for a future time of earthly bliss for the nation. But as in the later Apocalypses an ever-growing tendency to an expansion of national limitations manifested itself, so this ideal took the form of a universal kingdom of God embracing all the nations of the earth. In this widened form, for which Hellenism had prepared the way, the social idea of a kingdom of God realised in a renewed earth passed over into the religion of Christ, and secured to it from the very first its absolute superiority to the individualistic faith of the various mysteries. The Catholic faith in the kingdom of Christ united in itself the two ideals, individual and social, of religious hope and yearning: it gave to the individual soul the pledge of perfection and salvation which was promised to the devotees of Buddhism and the Græco-Oriental mysteries; it prophesied the social and moral renewal and transfiguration of earthly humanity into a city of God—the hope of Judæo-Hellenic faith. It is manifest that the heavenly Lord

who guaranteed to his followers the fulfilment of this twofold ideal was fully equipped for the conquest of all other lords, and was alone destined to universal sovereignty. His most serious rival was not however Mithras, but the Roman emperor, he who held the imperium in the kingdom of earth. Individual heathen might find a certain satisfaction for the particular needs of the pious soul in the cults of their mysteries; but another need equally deep, the yearning of the nations for a new social order in which righteousness, mercy, and peace should rule, remained unsatisfied, and so the hope of mankind, in spite of constant disillusionment, clung the more tenaciously to the earthly divinity upon the throne of the Cæsars. In an inscription discovered lately at Priene, probably dating from the year 9 B.C.,[1] we find the following hymn to the Emperor Augustus:—"This day [the birthday of Augustus] has given a new aspect to the

[1] Ed. by Mommsen and Wilamowitz in *Das deutsche archäologische Institut*, XXIII. part 3; it is translated and discussed by Harnack in *Die christliche Welt*, 1899, No. 51.

whole world; all things would have sunk in ruin if the sun of universal joy had not risen upon mankind in him now born. He judges rightly who recognises in this day the beginning of life and all its forces; now at last the time is gone which forced men to regret that they were ever born. Providence, which governs the living universe, has filled this man with such gifts for the welfare of mankind that it has sent him as a saviour to us and to the coming generations; he will put an end to every feud, and work in all things a glorious transformation. In his appearing the hopes of our forefathers are fulfilled; he has not only surpassed all former benefactors of mankind, but it is even impossible that a greater than he should ever appear. The birthday of the god has brought into the world the good tidings (Evangel) which are bound up with him. A new era must begin from his birth." Of like tenor is an inscription from Halicarnassus[1]:—

[1] British Museum, No. 994. Given also by Harnack in *Die christliche Welt.* See note on preceding page.

"The Deity for the joy of our life has brought to men Cæsar Augustus, who is the father of his fatherland Rome the divine, and also the paternal Zeus and saviour of the whole race of mankind, whose providence has fulfilled and surpassed the prayers of all men. For land and sea rejoice in the gift of peace, cities flourish in concord and wealth, every good thing is present in abundance." Finally, we may note a certain combination of Mithras-worship and emperor-worship in the words addressed to the Emperor Nero by the Armenian king Tiridates, who accompanied by magi had come to Rome:—"I am thy slave, my lord; I am come to thee, my god, to adore thee, even as Mithras."[1] From this it is seen that the belief in the human incarnation of the divinity in the Roman emperor, and the faith

[1] Dio. Cassius, ed. Becker, ii. p. 253. Suetonius, *Nero*, 13 and 30. According to an interesting conjecture of Dieterich (*Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, III. 1 *ff.*), this historical event lies at the root of the Gospel story of the adoration paid to the new-born king of the Jews by the magi (St Matt., chap. ii.).

in the spiritual saviour of the mysteries, not only existed together on the soil of Asia Minor, but even tended to amalgamate with one another. But in face of the fundamental difference between the separate objects of the two faiths, this tendency, though it was psychologically natural, could never come to fulfilment in the sphere of heathenism. At this supreme crisis of history, the demand for a god, who should alike guarantee to the individual soul deliverance in the world to come and to society the earthly kingdom of prosperity and peace, was already present in the expectation and yearning of the nations; only the question remained—whence should come to them the assurance of its realisation? The answer was given in Catholic Christianity, which united the Messianic king of the earthly kingdom of God with the mystic conqueror of death and dispenser of life in the one ideal personality of the eternal Son of God, who really became man, died, descended into Hell, conquered death and Satan, victoriously rose

from the dead and ascended into Heaven, sits at the right hand of God, and will come again on the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and the dead. All these articles of belief are to be found in the religious cults of the expiring world of antiquity, here and there, in East and West, in the manifold forms of Jewish Apocalypse, of Oriental mysticism and Gnosis, of Greek speculation and Roman Cæsar-worship; there was still wanting only the single subject for the synthesis of these predicates, the nucleus round which this chaotic seething mass of religious ideas could crystallise into a new world of faith and hope for the present life and that to come. This point of unity was given in the person of Jesus, the Galilean Saviour and King of the Jews, who by the cross has become the Saviour of the World and King of the all-embracing kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION

As we survey the numerous points of likeness between the faith of the early Christians and the religious ideas current in the world around them, we can scarcely fail to be convinced that Christianity could not have fallen from Heaven as something quite new and unique, but that it sprang up in the world of those days as the ripe fruit of ages of development and in a soil that was already prepared. Now it is of course easily comprehensible that this new evolutionist method of inquiry should have such a disturbing influence upon many persons, conservatives as well as critics, that they at once draw the most radical conclusions, and imagine that Christianity is robbed of its unique character and its abiding

worth because it appears to be nothing more than a combination of ideas that had existed for ages, and are nowadays altogether antiquated. But such conclusions are most hasty and rash, and testify to the influence of manifold errors, exaggerations, and crude judgments whose discovery and refutation ought to be the proper object of the calm and enlightened investigation of the religious historian. I can, at present, only permit myself to make a few suggestions in this direction.

Before all things, we must guard against the constant practice of imagining that the inward affinity of religious conceptions implies a connection in their external history. It is absolutely unjustifiable to argue from the former to the latter, for in doing this we overlook the fact that affinity of conceptions is not necessarily explained by borrowing and transmission from one sphere to another; but that from the same psychological causes, and with like social conditions, conceptions similar

in character may arise in different places quite spontaneously and independently of one another, and, indeed, have so arisen in numberless instances. Where then it is proved that certain conceptions are allied to one another, we must always first inquire closely whether their similarity is to be explained from the working of similar causes, or whether some kind of direct or indirect historical connection may with probability be admitted. But in the present state of our sciences of archæology and ethnology, the greatest circumspection in answering this question is most earnestly recommended.

The assumption of historical connection, whether direct or indirect, is only admissible with some probability in such cases where the similarity consists not simply in some common conception or some chance coincidence in expression, but extends to distinct successions of details. Several examples of this kind are to be found in the former chapters. I refer to the points of similarity

between the history of the infancy in Buddhist legend and in the Gospel of St Luke: the supernatural birth, the hymn of the heavenly hosts, the shining of light, the prophecy of a pious seer, the adoration of the wise men, and the parallels to the story of Jesus in the Temple when He was twelve years old (pp. 39–45); again I refer to the traits of the Indian legend of Krishna which run parallel to the narrative of St Matthew concerning the persecution of the Christ-child by Herod and the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem (p. 61); to the parallels to the story of the Temptation (pp. 51–53); to the date of the Resurrection, "on the third day" in the Egyptian Osiris-festival, or "after three days" in the Phrygian Attis-festival (p. 103); to the analogy of the apocalyptic purification by the blood of the Lamb to the Phrygian purification by the blood of the ram (pp. 132 *f.*); to the Mithras sacrament with bread and cup, the sign on the forehead, the Mithras festival on Sunday and on December 25th as the birth-

day of the god (pp. 129 *ff.* 144). In the face of such successions of similar traits, the possibility of historical interdependence must at least be admitted; indeed, in some cases its probability is to be presumed.

On the other hand, it would be a serious error did one attempt to derive the general conception of the Divine Sonship of Christ from some definite pre-Christian legend; indeed in some sense or other this conception is the common property of the religious humanity of all ages; in general, therefore, it has its ultimate source in the depths of the religious consciousness, in mankind's natural surmise that we are of divine descent, a surmise which has been everywhere awakened by the observation of the extraordinary gifts and deeds of particular men, and therefore has at first been connected with those elect heroes of knowledge and power who stand as the representatives and sureties of the close relationship of our common human nature with the divine. Also the double form in which the conception of divine son-

ship is found inside and outside Christianity—the apotheosis of the man and the incarnation of the deity—admits of a simple psychological explanation; it is the result of two distinct phases of mental outlook, both alike true. In the one case the divine sonship, in the sense of likeness to God, appears as the ideal to be striven after and the destined goal of human life; in the other case, the possibility of attaining to this ideal is seen to presuppose a real supernatural power existing from the very first in the soul, a divine instinct and definite tendency of nature which can only be conceived as the effect of the indwelling of a divine spirit. Also parallels are found in heathen religions to the idea of the God-man dying and rising again (ascending into Heaven), analogies whose roots reach back to the most primitive conceptions of animism concerning the yearly death and revival of the divine power of life in nature. But the Christian myth is not to be derived from this nature-myth, because it has its most direct source in the

historical fact of the death of Jesus, and the following visions seen by His disciples. Nevertheless those parallels are surely of significance, in that they remind us that the religious interpretation of those spiritual experiences in the consciousness of the Christian Church did not depend upon caprice or accident, but was the expression of the same eternal law whose sacred truth had impressed itself upon mankind from the beginning—the law that the corn of wheat must die in order to bring forth fruit, and that the Son of Man must suffer that He may enter into His glory (St John xii. 24 *f.*; St Luke xxiv. 25). The *leit motiv* of the Christian drama of Redemption, "Through Death to Life!" is in some form or other foreshadowed in the myths and ceremonies of many religions, and by this very fact it is declared to be one of those elementary fundamental truths which were not expressed for the first time in the Christian religion, though they were there revealed in their purest, because ethical and spiritual, form.

And this brings us to a further point of extreme importance in the comparative history of religion. In comparing two religions, people constantly make the mistake of neglecting their points of difference in the face of their points of likeness, or at least of setting so small a value upon the former that the higher religion seems absolutely debased to the level of the lower.[1] We have here in the case of history a close parallel to that misuse of the theory of evolution in natural science, in accordance with which man is set upon the same level as the ape as a mere variety of the same species. Such errors contribute greatly to discredit the just claim of the conception of evolution. It is not, however, the theory of evolution itself that is to blame for these vagaries, but only its one-sided and superficial employment by many empirics, who seem to be ignorant of the fact that every

[1] I instance the well-known Babel-Bibel lectures of Delitzsch. The best criticism of these is found in Gunkel's work, *Babylonien und die Religion Israels*, 1903.

new stage of development depends upon a "creative synthesis," which does not merely mingle the old elements, but transforms them absolutely, in that it brings them under the operation of a new law, so that the new development becomes indeed something quite different from what the sum of its elements was before. This general rule finds just its most brilliant exemplification in the relation of Christianity to the earlier religions from which it has developed as their higher unity and purer truth.

Primitive Christianity has transformed the Jesus of history into the Christ of faith, in that it has, after the manner of ancient animism, objectified the impression which it received of His life and death into a self-existing Christ-Spirit, and has then in thought identified this spirit with the heavenly Son of Man of the Apocalypses and the Son of God and Logos of Gnosis, and has finally brought this eternal heavenly Being down to earth to become man, to die, to return to Heaven, there

to share the throne and sovereignty of God until His future Coming to judge the world. In this divinely human drama of Redemption the Christian faith attained to a form of expression, which, the closer its formal connection with heathen myths, was only the more fitted for the conquest of heathenism. But who can fail to see that in this process the ancient forms are made the receptacle of a content essentially new, and accordingly acquire a much deeper religious import and a much purer moral significance than they ever had before? All the fantastic spirits, divinities, and lords of the religion of nature, and no less the earthly deities on the throne of the Cæsars, sank into nothingness before the one Lord Christ, who stands now "The Spirit," simply and absolutely (1 Cor. iii. 17) because in His nature faith perceives the consummation of all those spiritual forces called into being by the impression made upon the soul by the personality of Jesus—the perfection of what she feels to be a new life from God, active and efficacious

within herself. It matters not that this faith in Christ the Lord, the Spirit, is again clothed in the garment of antique mythology, and finds sacramental expression in ceremonies similar to the rites of heathenism, still in nature and import this Christian faith and ritual worship was something quite different from its heathen analogues; for the ruling principle, to which the ancient forms were subjected, was no longer the succession of life and death in nature, but a moral ideal beheld in the life and death of Jesus—the ideal of sacred love which has compassion upon the weary and heavy laden, which seeks to become great not in lordship but in service, and offers its life a sacrifice in the cause of God and the brethren. This ideal was no mere work of imagination like the moral ideals of the Stoics, Platonists, and Pythagoreans, which were fashioned by philosophers for philosophers, and, therefore, remained the subject of learned discussion, without influence on the life of the people; on

the contrary, it was actually manifested in the life and death of an inspired prophet and friend of the people. In His words and works, and most of all in His death, it appealed in simple, heart-piercing tones to all without distinction—to the wise and ignorant, to high and low, to righteous and sinners. Nor did the inspiring power of this ideal cease even with the death of the Master; rather it never released its hold upon His followers; it continued its work in their souls, forming the one indissoluble bond which bound them in communion with Him and with one another, and assured them of His never-ending life with, and on behalf of, the community of the faithful.

It was only natural that this ideal, which had been realised in the historic personality of Jesus, should now be personified in an eternal heavenly being, a son of God. Such personification was indeed quite in accordance with the animistic thought of antiquity, wherein all kinds of lively affections of the soul were objectified as spirit-beings, and explained as

the result of the operation of these beings in and upon man. But there is also an abiding truth in this animistic personification, if we only understand how to translate the ancient mythical language into the psychological language of to-day. No one will deny that an ideal is above the limitations of time and coincides with no one of its historical manifestations; but may not the love which conquers the demon of selfishness, which raises the individual soul above the narrow world of self-interest, and in society transforms the natural struggle for existence into the endeavour to realise the moral solidarity of all men—may not this love be rightly conceived as a supernatural power revealing itself as a divine all-attracting force in the souls of men, like the force of gravitation in the material world? In well-known words Kant has recognised the revelation of God in the laws of the starry firmament and in the moral law of the heart; but love is the fulfilling of the law, since it transforms the external

compelling command into the free impulse and active force of the heart; why then may we not perceive in love "the incarnation of the divine Logos," which was consummated not once only, but ever comes to pass where love unites the hearts of men and consecrates society so that it becomes the kingdom of God? And since love in its highest manifestation in self-sacrifice for the common good is sure that it never loses, but only then truly finds itself (St Mark vii. 35), so in very deed that divinely human act of loving self-sacrifice in service of the brethren is the way to eternal life, and that drama of Redemption, with its *leit motiv*, "Through death to life! Die and you shall live!" brings to typical expression an eternal truth in the moral government of the world.

Still the question may be asked—why could not this moral ideal have been presented in its simplicity, without the garment of myth, in the teaching and example of Jesus? Why, that is, could not the Jesus of history instead

of the Christ of faith have been made the sole subject of Gospel preaching? The answer is twofold. In the first place, the Gospel when preached in the heathen world, in order that it might be understood, was compelled to accommodate itself to the prevailing heathen ideas, in short to the myths; it could not conquer the myths and ceremonies of the religion of nature otherwise than by clothing its new ethical ideal in the given forms and transforming these from within. Moreover, in the second place, we must not forget that the historical Jesus, although He was the first to be strongly inspired by the new spirit of divine sonship and of love, and so has given the mightiest impulse to its awakening and its sovereignty in the hearts of men, was not therefore solely the embodiment of this ideal principle. This simply could not be; for a principle or ideal can never exactly coincide with any individual manifestation in time and space, but reaches far beyond and above all these, a statement which is corroborated in

this particular case by careful examination of the tradition of the Gospels. According to these writings Jesus was a child of His times and of His own people, He was subject to the law of Moses, He shared the Messianic hopes of His nation, in particular influenced by the apocalyptic tendency of contemporary Jewish thought He expected the near approach of the end of the world and the miraculous dawn of a new creation; and this apocalyptic tendency has left even upon His moral teaching the impress indeed of its own deep earnestness, but also of its spirit of ascetic renunciation of the world in view of the hereafter. Now it is simply self-evident that neither the national and legal, nor the apocalyptic and ascetic, side of the mind of Jesus could become for all peoples and times an object of religious belief and moral imitation. It was therefore absolutely necessary that the universal, eternal, and ideal import of His personality should be delivered from the individual and social limitations of its temporal

manifestation, and as the real principle of redemption should find concrete expression in a form above the limitations of time. But what other form could have been found than the symbolic language of myth, of religious fiction, whereby the fancy has in all ages presented the world of the divine and eternal in the tangible, yet supernatural, characters and actions of miraculous story? The deliverance of the Christian idea from the rigid fetters of Judaism was only possible at the price of its investiture in the fluent forms of myths and rites. And although these indeed were in many ways connected with the ancient forms of nature-religion, yet they had this great compensating advantage,—they were free from that slavery to history which is the characteristic of Judaism and every legal religion. The divine action of the myths was indeed placed in the past, but it was in itself an indefinite fluid past which in the rites that interpreted the myth was completely converted into a timeless present, for the symbolic imitation of the

mythical history made of it an action ever new. The sacraments had just the same significance for the ancient church. They served to abolish the time-form of the redemption myth, in that they represented under symbolic signs the eternal spiritual truth that lay hidden in the myth—the truth of the continuous incarnation of God in the hearts of good men, and of the continual thankoffering of the community which in obedience and love offers itself to God.[1]

Accordingly myth and rite were certainly the most suitable forms of expression for primitive Christian belief. But they have much to teach us also. They show us how we ought to let history point the way above history to the eternal and omnipresent God, who is a God of the living and not of the dead; they warn us to

[1] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, x. 6, 20: Hoc est sacrificium Christianorum: multi unum corpus in Christo. Hoc etiam sacramento altaris frequentat ecclesia, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur . . . . quæ, cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum offerre discit. Huic summo veroque sacrificio cuncta sacrificia falsa cesserunt.

free ourselves from the fatal ban of historicism, which seeks God's revelation only in the records of a dead past, and thus loses the power of finding it in the living present. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen! But go hence to your brethren; there will ye see Him! We are to behold the living Christ-Spirit, this ever indwelling divine principle of mankind, everywhere where the souls of men open themselves to the knowledge of every truth, where hearts glow with enthusiasm for all that is good, where love fulfils its daily offering of self-sacrifice for the good of the community, where there is conflict and suffering for the cause of justice and righteousness in society, where there is faith in the continual coming of God's kingdom among us, and where in this faith the world is overcome.

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